

The Sun's Tears by Brian M. Stableford ● **Downfall** by
Jeff Jones ● **Stella Blue** by Grant Carrington ● and the vivid
conclusion of **The Domains of Koryphon** by Jack Vance

October 1974

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OCTOBER, 1974

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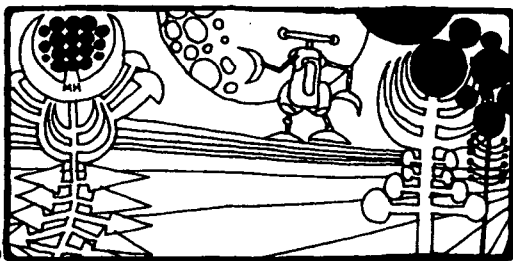
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**TED
WHITE**

EDITORIAL



ATTENTION, CONTRIBUTORS: After considerable soul-searching by the editorial staff, and after a variety of alternative proposals were discussed and discarded, I have decided to initiate a new policy for the submission of unsolicited manuscripts. Beginning September first, all such submissions must be accompanied by 25¢ in coin or stamps.

A number of factors precipitated this new policy. The most important are these:

1. As I have mentioned previously in these pages (and in those of our sister magazine, *FANTASTIC*), we are forced by the economic realities of publishing to operate on a very slim budget. In fact what this has boiled down to is that most of our editorial staff is made up of unpaid volunteers. Chief among these volunteers is Grant Carrington, who in 1971 offered us his services as a "first reader". The first reader is the editor who initially sifts through story submissions, weeding out those which are obviously unsuitable, and passing on to me those he feels may be suitable for purchase and publication. Grant has provided many long hours of service to *AMAZING* and *FANTASTIC*, reading the bulk of the unsolicited manuscripts (the so-called "slush pile") over the past three years. Grant was instrumental in developing our present rejection slip—a

"checklist" which helps those whose stories are rejected to understand *why* their stories came back. Such a rejection slip has demanded more of Grant than the usual "Sorry your story does not suit our needs" slip would—it has required of him careful consideration of each and every story he has rejected. (And letters from many of you have expressed appreciation for both this type of rejection slip and Grant's use of it.)

Although Grant has during this time been employed on a full-time basis, he has devoted many hours each week to reading manuscripts for us—and for *you*—often to the detriment of his own writing time, entirely gratis, his only payment his name on our masthead each issue.

Additionally, both Moshe Feder and Thomas Monteleone have also read manuscripts for us, equally unpaid.

At present all three are reading an average of four to six hundred manuscripts a month, with the lion's share falling on Grant.

2. Effective July, Grant will no longer be able to continue reading manuscripts for you. He is moving out of the area and intends to devote himself to writing on a full-time basis.

3. I have had discussions with the Publisher about hiring a salaried first reader, but there is simply no money in the publishing budget. Indeed, re-

cent cost increases—primarily paper, printing and shipping—have all but wiped out any surplus our recent cover-price hike might give us. (At the Publisher's initiative, we have also increased our basic payments for stories.) As yet it is too soon to know whether our price-increase will have an adverse effect upon our sales. Our present projections are based upon the hope that it will not; if it does, that will be one more factor to contend with.

FIVE YEARS AGO the unsolicited manuscripts were not read. They were returned, unread, by the publisher. At that time these magazines published only a small percentage of new stories (60% to 75% of the fiction was reprinted) and those were by "name" authors.

As part of our policy of revitalizing AMAZING and FANTASTIC the reprints were phased out. And at the same time we began searching out and publishing new authors. Several of these authors—Gordon Eklund, Geo. Alec Effinger—have since established themselves as major writers in our field. Others will join them. It is my belief that no magazine can subsist solely upon already established talent, and that it is the duty of every sf magazine to find and develop new authors. This we have done and will continue to do.

But up until now we have done so largely because of the willingness of a few people like Grant Carrington to freely donate their time to this. And Grant's decision to return to full-time writing simply brings into sharper relief a point which has been with us for some time: It is not enough to depend upon continued volunteer efforts and the goodwill of the Grant Carringtons of this world in order to

handle story submissions.

THUS, OUR DECISION: A 25¢ "handling charge" must accompany each submission. We've tried to keep this charge simple—it's 25¢ whether you send us a two-page story or a novel—and relatively low. Twenty-five cents, after all, is usually less than you spend to mail your manuscript to us in the first place.

And we've tried to be fair. If your story is accepted, your 25¢ will be refunded with our letter of acceptance. If you are a member of the Science Fiction Writers of America, or qualify for membership in the SFWA, you need not include the 25¢. That is to say, if you're an already published, professional author, the charge does not apply to you.

WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR 25¢? It goes to the editor who reads your story. It is not kept by Ultimate Publications, Inc. It is, in fact, payment to the first reader (or readers) for his time and consideration of your manuscript. It is his small but tangible reward for his still largely volunteer service. (If he reads four hundred submissions a month, it means he will be paid \$100 for that month. This is still a small sum for the work and time involved.)

Who will these editors be? Their names will appear on our masthead. They will include Thomas Monteleone (whose efforts up to now have been totally unpaid) and Richard Snead.

Will they reject your story simply in order to keep your 25¢? Frankly, no. We have discussed this point, in anticipation of such a complaint, and the unanimous feeling is that 25¢ is too little to haggle over. Each of our first readers is himself a writer and

(cont. on 3rd cover)

THE SUN'S TEARS

Brian Stableford is an English author best known here for his novels, among them To Challenge Chaos (DAW, 1972), The Halcyon Drift (DAW, 1972), Rhapsody in Black (DAW, 1973) and Promised Land (DAW, 1974). He will be remembered by readers of this magazine for his essay, "SF: The Nature of the Medium" last issue. Barry Malzberg has said of Stableford, "He is the absolute best writer who has come into the field in the past couple of years." The following is his first story for us.

BRIAN M. STABLEFORD

Illustrated by JEFF JONES

YOU THINK THAT if you're twenty years an Earthman, you'll be an Earthman forever. But it isn't so. After a lousy twenty years you've finished growing. You have all the brain cells you're ever going to have, and from then on it's downhill all the way. What you are is the sum total of all your experiences pinned, painted and plastered on to the framework you were born with. What you're born with is all Earthman, and all your developing life you're Earthman. But what you *are* is only a small part of what you *might be*, and what you've seen and done is a pitifully tiny fraction of all there is to see and do when the whole universe is available to you.

That's why starmen aren't Earthmen any more. That's why starmen forget their homes and cast off their humanity. No matter

what sort of man it is that takes a ship out to the stars, the stars will seduce him, imprison him, claim him for their own. There's no power on Earth that can resist.

Colfax, of course, thought that it could never happen to him. In a way, he was right, because Colfax had little enough humanity to lose. He was a mechanical man, was Colfax—a man whose emotions obeyed orders, and who never remembered his dreams when he woke up in the morning.

He first set out from his home world when he was twenty years old, crewman on the starliner *Leda*. He returned seven times, twice with the *Leda* and then with other ships. The eighth time he lifted, it was in his own ship, the *Grey Bitch*. He never returned.

A dozen years and a little more



he gave to wandering, to doing what he could wherever he could, and all the while imagining himself to be a part of the great universal entity, a particle of true existence, possessing nothing save freedom, unencumbered by the limitations of principles, philosophies, perspectives, ideas and laws. But in time the boundless impartiality of space robbed him of even that illusion, and he embarked in the end (as do they all) upon the Starman's Quest, the search for his own, personal, perfect world; his Spiritual Home, his Heaven.

This story is about Colfax and not someone else because he (unlike the others) reached his Heaven. He found his perfect world. You may think of it as luck if you wish. Every starman believes that somewhere in the universe there is a world shaped for his needs, and that only luck decides whether he finds it or not. Conversely, you may believe that there was something in Colfax that was not in other men, something which allowed him to find what other men died looking for.

It happened like this.

On Marsyad, there was a girl.

The law of poetic justice (in conjunction with the laws of chance and assisted by the vagaries of wishful thinking) gives rise to the illusion that on *every* world there is a girl. It is an exaggeration, but it isn't so far from the truth as cynicism might lead one to suspect. Girls (human,

pseudohuman and humanoid) come in all shapes and sizes and all the colours of the rainbow. When one descends to fundamentals, there is only one indispensable qualification, and that isn't particularly complicated. Given that, only a narrow mind can stand between a starman and a girl in every port. The finding of beauty is, after all, only a matter of an educated eye.

And so there was a girl on Marsyad. Colfax, naturally enough, wasn't fool enough to believe that paradise could be found purely and simply in a girl. However, like most people, he believed that a girl was indispensable for the purposes of enjoying paradise once he found it.

The girl, Siorane, was the daughter of a shopkeeper whose most noticeable and distinctive characteristic was his xenophobia. This applied particularly to outworlders, most particularly to Earthmen, and most particularly of all to Colfax. The shopkeeper's name was Orgoglio. He reminded Colfax of a vulture, because of his naked, wrinkled head, his bluish skin, his big-boned nose and his wicked little eyes. To be fair, most of these were racial characteristics and in no way correlated with his evil disposition towards others. Siorane too had many of these characteristics, but in her they combined to give a totally different overall impression. If Orgoglio was like a vulture, then Siorane was a falcon, black-

plumed, sleek and graceful.

When Colfax first saw the girl (at a distance) he said to himself: "That's the one I want." There was no nonsense in his head about love, nor even about beauty. Colfax was no romantic—he thought in terms of acquisition and possession. He had seen marsyades before, on other worlds, and knew that they could be bought and sold with reasonable ease, provided that one had the price. The marsyads regarded their women as little more than chattels (considerably less than chattels in some ways) and they were natural-born horse traders. Usury and extortion were national sports on Marsyad, and milking outworlders the most popular pastime.

It took Colfax a day or two to locate the girl, and he permitted himself a day or two more to study the case in depth. He decided that his initial judgement had in no way played him false, and that this was, indeed the precise augmentation required by his as-yet-unfound perfect world. He also came to the conclusion that some sort of deal could be made. He knew the way things worked on Marsyad, and he reckoned that he could work the system and not come out of it too badly. He reckoned, however, without the innate ugliness of Orgoglio's soul.

It might be in order here to point out that a certain amount of Colfax's troubles can be laid at his own door. Had he not been such

a cold, calculating individual—had he had the ordinary human failing of romantic foolishness—he might have bypassed Orgoglio and the customs of Marsyad and employed the time-honoured Earth strategy of enticement, seduction and elopement. It might not have worked, but on the other hand, planets where women are treated like dirt are custom-made for the success of such earthly courtesies. But Colfax was Colfax, and he thought commerce was commerce, so he went to see Orgoglio, and never so much as spoke to Siorane herself.

Orgoglio took one look at Colfax and decided to get rid of him. This was in no way concerned with paternal affection, and the indigestion from which he was suffering at the time probably played the largest part in deciding his attitude. Indigestion is one of those nagging afflictions which takes away even a con man's pleasure in cheating people.

"You like my daughter, hey?" said Orgoglio, sounding remarkably like Shylock. Colfax expressed a certain superficial interest which might wane within the minute unless Orgoglio made a quick and reasonable offer.

"Well," Orgoglio retorted, "I'm not selling her to *you*."

At this, Colfax was surprised, disconcerted and not a little offended. It was no way to run a business.

He persisted.

Orgoglio remained firm.

Siorane listened.

Now Siorane was no fool. She wasn't fond of her father, and she wasn't enamoured of Marsyad either. Of course, she'd never been anywhere else, and thus wasn't in a position to make comparisons, nor was she foolish enough to believe travellers' tales. But merely to know that there *were* other worlds was enough. Siorane had never been happy in the whole of her short life.

She saw in Colfax a chance to get away. She also saw in Colfax a strong, cruel, empty man who was almost as bad as her father. The decision was agonising. In the end she decided that the best way out of the dilemma (all this assuming, of course, that she could contrive to influence the bargain) was to set a price on herself that the Earthman would find extremely difficult to pay, thus assuring her value in his eyes. She was clever enough to guess that the more Colfax had to pay for her, the higher would be the regard in which he held her.

She therefore went to her father and whispered in his ear that the quickest way to get rid of the Earthman and make a fool of him at the same time was to demand of him that he should pay as a price for her one of the sun's tears.

Orgoglio laughed, causing himself sharp pains in the gut. The "tears of the sun" were gems highly prized on Marsyad. They were impossible to steal, almost

impossible to buy, and damnably difficult to find. Yet the task was safely within the bounds of credibility. It sounded like a pleasant joke.

"You can have her," said Orgoglio, rolling his eyes with the histrionic dismay of a trader pretending that he has been beaten down below his profit margin, "in exchange for one of the sun's tears."

Colfax thought it over.

"What the hell are the sun's tears?" he asked cautiously.

"That," said Orgoglio, "is for you to find out."

"And where shall I find out?"

Orgoglio shrugged.

Having arrived at a price, Colfax was reluctant to let go. Not only had he formed an uncommonly strong desire to buy the girl, but his pride had been offended by the manner of Orgoglio's bargaining. He struggled with his reason for a moment or two, and then agreed. To you, it may perhaps seem a ridiculous bargain to have made, but Colfax was a starman, a questor, and when a man is consumed by a quest which has no clear destination, he is very willing to accept commissions which lend some kind of substance to his searching. Colfax had, indeed, promised a very high price for a marsyade girl. But it was not too high a price to pay for a purpose to his life. That is a paradox of the Starman's Quest: it is probably only a search for something to

search for.

COLFAX RETURNED to the *Grey Bitch*. Sitting beneath the ship was a man—an Earthman. He was old and thin and much marked by scars and space and alien air. He was one who had taken the Quest and failed. He'd lost his money and his ship, having given away his humanity and his identity. He was nothing now but a beggar on a lonely, hostile world.

"I greet you, brother," said the old man.

Colfax dug his hand into his pocket, and fetched out all the coins therefrom. None of them was Marsyad, but all of them were good and would buy food and clothing, if little else. Without pause, Colfax handed them over. It was not generosity, not charity. It told nothing about Colfax's character. It was convention—necessary custom. Starmen had to look after their own, because they had no one else to look after *them*. "I greet you, brother" meant exactly what it said.

"Tell me, brother," asked Colfax, kneeling to help the old man to his feet, "what would I mean if I talked about the sun's tears?"

"If you were to speak literally," replied the old one, "shining gems found only in the deepest mines of a few hot-cored worlds, Marsyad being one. If you were to say it, though, in conversation, you would mean it to convey the almost impossible."

Colfax and the old man shook hands. "I thank you, brother," said Colfax. The other smiled but offered no thanks. Colfax expected none. It was the old one who had rendered a service, not he.

The starman ate aboard his ship, then packed himself a bag containing clothes, currency, and all that was saleable, locked the door of the *Grey Bitch*, paid the port authority for her accomodation and set off in search of the sun's tears. He headed, not for the mines where the sun's tears might occasionally be unearthed, but for the oldest city on the world, the city of Anses Almangel. He did not need to ask to know that that was the place, on Marsyad, where the impossible was most likely to happen. It was the last remaining city (on this world, at least) of the Galacella.

Marsyad had, since the days of the first spaceship, been conquered three times. One conquest the marsyads had reversed, two they had absorbed. There was no trace of any conqueror on Marsyad now. But in their day, the conquerors had brought in, amongst their accoutrements and retinues, members of other conquered races. Most of these had been absorbed along with the conquerors, into the local cultures and the local races. But the Galacella had refused to be treated thus. Because they had no quarrel with the marsyads (no quarrel with anyone, in fact), they had been allowed to stay whilst

their erstwhile slave masters had not. The home world of the Galacella had never been identified. They existed only as the jetsam of empires, in ones and twos and tiny towns, scattered all over the universe. No one paid them much heed, and they had little to say to other people, but there was no Earthman who ever lived who did not find a use for the Galacella at least once in his life. Earthmen are the most curious people in the universe because they know so little, while the Galacella are the least curious of all peoples because they know so much. That, in fact, is not the only remarkable difference. Earthmen are the most consistent, consummate and accomplished liars in the universe, while the Galacella always tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, as they see it. You can see, therefore, why there is a natural affinity between Earthmen and the Galacella and why Colfax, faced with a difficulty, went looking for them.

The journey to Anses Almangel took some time, but all that occurred thereon was commonplace in nature, and there is no point in boring you with a blow by blow account of it. Suffice it to say that he got there and nothing relevant to the story happened in the meantime.

Once there, he simply stopped the first Gallacellone that he passed in the street, and said: "Where can I obtain one of the

sun's tears?"

The Gallacellone looked him over with a ruminative expression in his big, baby-blue eyes, and thought it over for a couple of minutes. Then he said: "If you are ever to possess one of the sun's tears, then it will be a gift from the Avageyn, which is a female creature inhabiting a planetoid called Exar in the system of the star Callia."

Then he smiled, gave Colfax a friendly nod, and went about his business.

Colfax began the long walk back.

You may think that Colfax had come a long way for very little, and that there were a lot of other things he could have asked the Galacella while they were available. But Colfax was a clever man, and he'd had dealings with the Galacella before. Also, he'd been warned. You don't mess about with oracles. Curiosity killed the cat, and cats have nine lives, which adds up to pretty convincing evidence that curiosity is one of the most lethal things you can fall prey to. Colfax knew better than to follow up his question with some idiotic comment like "How do you know?" Because the Gallacellone would simply have smiled, and said nothing. That was the whole and absolute truth. There was no way he *could* know. He just did.

Nor was there any point in querying the fact that the Gallacellone had said "if". All truth

is conditional, even the whole truth—*especially* the whole truth—though it takes a clever man to see it, let alone to understand why.

On the way back, Colfax's feet began to hurt. That may seem irrelevant to you, but in defining Colfax's destiny, it was important. Colfax was a Questor, and the one thing which a Questor always needs is a destination—however temporary. When you have a destination then you can simply head towards it and forget everything else. Having a destination is enough in itself to give one a sense of purpose. You don't ask questions, you don't worry. You just go. And so Colfax never questioned what he was doing while he was simply going from point A to point B.

Until, that is, his feet started hurting. There is nothing like blisters for making a man stop in his tracks and say to himself "Why the hell am I doing this?"

And Colfax did. He had second thoughts. He knew that the girl wasn't really worth all this effort. After all, the law of Stereotypic existence clearly stated that there was a girl on every world. So why flog himself to death over this one?

Then he got round to thinking about how much one of the sun's tears was worth, and how it might not be a bad idea to fly out to Callia anyway, just in case, to see if the Avageyn thought it was his birthday.

This is probably the branching point of the story. Had Colfax, like any normal moron, gone running off to Callia in single-minded search of the price of the girl he loved, he might indeed have enjoyed the favour of the cosmic whim, got hold of the gem, got the girl and turned the whole story into a meaningless farce. Contrary to popular opinion, that is no way to reach paradise. Instead, because his feet hurt, Colfax flew to Callia with mixed motives (which, being versatile, are usually useful motives to carry around) and what happened was quite different.

THE AVAGEYN was huge. She lay in the dust of her airless abode looking for all the world as if she were made of black rock. Her face reminded one of a giant, wide-mouthed, bug-eyed lizard. Her eyes never shifted from her contemplation of the silent stars. She never blinked, or smiled, or sneezed, or slept.

Colfax landed the *Grey Bitch* between two of her sixteen tentacles, orientated so that the cleanest of the portholes gave him a clear view of her austere visage. Then he waited.

Waiting was one of the few things within the scope of mankind that Colfax was not very good at. He fretted, he fidgeted and he worried. The Avageyn simply ignored him.

How big, wondered Colfax, was the Gallacellone's "if"?

A long time passed. Day by day (Exar turned on its axis about once an hour) and night by night Colfax watched the sunlight wander across the Avageyn's unwavering eyes, and then leave her to deepest shadow again.

Eventually, he tired of sitting and doing nothing. It was obvious that if things remained as they were, then the incredible beast would never even deign to notice him. Therefore, he put on his spacesuit and left the ship. He walked along one of the tentacles until he stood beneath the colossal face, looking up into the vast lenticular eyes.

They gave no sign that his presence was known to the Avageyn. She was as impassive as the legendary Sphinx. Colfax felt a twinge of irritation as he wondered what to do next. He felt like a fool, standing so close to such a creature. She seemed as unsympathetic to his cause as did the cold silver light of the multimillion stars.

His mind formed the word "Please" and he radiated the thought with all his might. There was no response. He felt helpless. After a few more minutes of silent confrontation, he turned away. And as he turned, the Avageyn *pounced*. Her great wide mouth split and gaped and her tongue lapped him up as if he were an ant. The lips slapped shut as he was drawn into the cavernous maw, and he was sealed in darkness.

Colfax never had time to be frightened, or even to know that something had happened. As the stars were switched off, so was his mind. There was no sensation of time passing. He had turned away from the face of the alien leviathan, and then he was naked, breathing keen, lilac-scented air.

He stood on a silver beach, a narrow strip of lustrous sand which separated a cerulean ocean from a high forest of pale trees. Flower petals drifting on the wind fell about him like roseate rain and brushed his skin with spidery lightness.

Between the trees were houses built on tall stilts, their walls woven into the canopy of the forest. There were people too, crouching among the branches and watching him. Most of them were children.

Three men, tall and silver haired, came from the trees to greet him. They appeared to have expected his coming, because there was warmth in their voices, and no surprise. Colfax could not understand what they said, but the way in which they spoke was welcome enough.

They gave him food and wine, and talked to him continually in their unfamiliar but appealing language. The flow of meaningless sound had a mesmeric effect upon him, and the sweetness of the air was narcotic

THE BLOOM FELL from the trees, and in time, the fruit

ripened. The air was always alive with scent and sunlight. Colfax walked on air, his very breathing a delight. The time slid past him and around him at colossal speed. The days were born and the days died just as if, he was on any ordinary world of the known universe, and yet each day and each night contained fifteen hours and more. His mind was clear like the night skies, which in this place had no stars. His thoughts were liquid and his feelings glowed and sparkled within his body.

Beneath his lofty hut were the woven branches of a great tree, and between the roots of the tree were small pools in which swam tiny silver fish. He fed upon the fruit as it matured on the branches and on the bread which the villagers gave him, which they made from corn which grew in fields beyond the forest to the east. On three days out of five he would join them in the fields, or in the mill or at any other place where they chose to labour. He loved the work and he loved the people, although he never learned a word of their language—not even their names. They still talked to him as though he was one of their own, and because it did not matter to them that he could not understand, it did not matter to him either.

And still the days and the nights hurried by and their number mounted and grew. And still he breathed the sweetness and the heaviness of the air,

which trapped him—unknowing and uncaring—within the confines of his dream.

Three hundred days passed, and each day longer than the days by which he had counted his life, before that day came when the leaves began to fall from the trees and the last of the fruit had been eaten and the air lapsed into staleness and lifelessness.

He awoke on that morning and looked at his hands and found caluses worn into the palms as testimony to the labour which had been his share of the life of the village. He stared at the lemon-yellow sun as it rose behind a veil of thin mist. He knew that it was a real star and that he was in a real place. But he also knew that this was no place that the *Grey Bitch* could bring him to.

That day was the first day he spent with his eyes fully open and his mind unclouded. He found the people as pleasant and as friendly as they had always been. He found the forest as beautiful, the sand as silver and the sea as blue. But he no longer looked at them with the same eyes. The air was cool and empty and *dead*. And when he went to his bed that night, he wanted to dream of the *Grey Bitch*, and of bright stars, even though he would not remember his dreams when another morning came.

And when he awoke into that morning, he was in his bunk aboard the *Grey Bitch* and clutched within the fist of his

right hand was one of the sun's tears.

It was coloured like fire and it was warm. It glowed and the sparks within its surface were in continuous chaotic movement. Colfax looked at it and he laughed. It was power, it was wealth. The cosmic whim had shown him one of its rare kindnesses—so he thought—and he had paid such a small price in that year he had spent on the world where the avageyn had sent him.

He returned to Marsyad, and he sought out Orgoglio the shopkeeper.

Orgoglio took one look at the sun's tear, and he also laughed. There were mixed emotions in Orgoglio's laugh. For one thing, it was a fine joke to have played upon an Earthman to command him to find one of the sun's tears and have the command carried out to the letter. For another, he thought that this priceless gem might actually become *his* in return for his almost-worthless daughter. Let it not be imagined that Orgoglio liked Colfax better now than he had a year previously. But his eyes were now fixed upon the fire-stone, and he never saw Colfax at all.

Colfax laughed too, because he had caught sight of the girl, in the back of the shop. She was radiating happiness. Her most romantic of childish daydreams seemed to be coming true. The Earthman had managed to find one of the

sun's tears, as she had hoped he might. (She had had no real conception of the difficulties which could be involved when she had suggested the task.) Now he had come back to claim her, or so she thought.

But Colfax's laughter signified anything but that. He was laughing at himself, and the crazy notions which sometimes entered his head. Siorane was still beautiful, but she was not unusual. The spark of infatuation was dead inside him. She had been worth the price that was asked of him—but only when that price was asked. Now that he could afford to pay the price, she was not worth one thousandth of it.

Colfax laughed long, and Orgoglio's laughter faded away.

Then Colfax laughed even harder, and Siorane saw the truth, but stoically refused to weep. She knew her own foolishness and absorbed its pain very rapidly. That is a useful talent which marsyades need and therefore possess.

The gem made Colfax very rich. He sold it on Pelera for a small fortune. He sold the *Grey Bitch* and bought a far finer ship called the *Rainbow*. And he set off once again on his Quest.

It took him ten years and more to realize that he had found his paradise and forsaken it. It took him ten years to remember the scents of that alien summer, and how they had made him feel, and what they had made him *into*.

That it took so long is one of

the innumerable corollaries to the Law of Poetic Justice. A man at a different age is a different man. The goal of Colfax's Quest changed as he changed, and by the time he grew to know his destination, he grew to know that he had abandoned it a good many years before.

He went back to Exar in the system of Callia, and found the Avageyn just as he had left her, immutable and untiring. He left his space ship and went to stand within the shadow of her face, and there he found his old spacesuit, which had stood there during all of the ten years, and the year which he had spent elsewhere, as though it was waiting.

He took it back to the *Rainbow*, and got into it as he had done before, and went back to the Avageyn exactly as he had on the previous occasion. His mind formed the word "Please", and he radiated it with all his might. There was no response. He felt helpless. There was a different man inside the suit, with different thoughts and dreams and needs. He waited for a long time, but he waited in vain. The Avageyn had no more gifts for him.

A good deal later, on Stagirite, he met a Gallacellone, and took upon himself the tremendous responsibility of asking:

"Where is the world where I once spent a summer, which has no stars in its skies?"

"If it exists," said the Gallacellone, "then it is beyond your power to find it again."

And that, of course, was a virtual sentence of death upon poor Colfax. He didn't go away and commit suicide, nor did he waste away and die. That wasn't his way at all. But after that encounter with the truth, he was an empty man even by his own empty standards.

A thousand other men searched like Colfax for their own version of heaven, and never even caught a glimpse. Colfax lived in his paradise for a long, long summer. That is probably more luck than any starman is entitled to. After all, the Cosmic Whim isn't exactly fond of starmen. It lends its greatest favours to those men who *know* who and what they are, who do not need the Quest, and who *understand* when other men speak to them in friendship.

—BRIAN M. STABLEFORD

ON SALE NOW IN OCTOBER THRILLING SF

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Your Dreams Can with your own



***Hundreds of men—previously working for salaries or wages
now enjoy greatly increased incomes, personal independence
and secure futures as owners of their own businesses
under the Duraclean Franchise***

Unthinking men may tell you that the day is past when an individual can build a successful business of his own. The fact is that Franchising has opened a wonderful new world of opportunity for such men. The "mama and papa" grocery store, and the corner druggist have succumbed to the gigantic chains. But, in their place an exciting new kind of business abounds with big profit opportunities for the individual.

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For the first time in 20 years, I've got security
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I have accomplished more with Duraclean in the past 5 years than in the 17 years I was working in the shop."

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In his "Annapolis Town" (February) Associate Editor Grant Carrington told the story of guitarist Richard Radcliffe, guitar-maker Tom Raymond, and Nikki—the young woman who wanted a highly unusual guitar built and, once she had it, disappeared with it into thin air. Although the story which follows is set far in the future of "Annapolis Town," it is a direct and moving sequel.

STELLA BLUE

GRANT CARRINGTON

Illustrated by RICHARD OLSEN

IT ALL rolls into one in the end; all the years combine and melt into a dream. The song is in the wind, stellar or temporal, and we drift like separate atoms in the tangled skein of DNA. If I make sense, you understand more than I do. My tale is twisted in time, flotsam on the stream, prisoner to the vagaries of the current.

Her name was Stella Blue. It was other things as well, but when Garcia first saw her, her name was Stella Blue. He didn't know her tale then, but if he had perhaps it would have made no difference to him.

She was playing guitar in the Row Jimmy. Once the eyes of the world had been on her, stripping her naked, exposing all her secret places, then passing on to look for others to slake their insatiable scrutiny and curiosity. But that is another tale and not a very interesting one. It is replayed every day with more melodramatic variants.

In the wake of that flood she had been tossed up, a piece of driftwood, in the Row Jimmy where she performed nightly, all the rest stored and forgotten in the attics of her life.

Garcia was young then, not yet the dire and fearsome wolf he was to become, and one of the best classical autar players in the world. He was a brilliant technician, flawlessly following the written line in all its complexity. But the improvisational confidence needed to play grilly and rock was not yet his, although he practiced in secret; more important, his line was cold, emotionless, unfeeling. It was a common criticism, and one that García didn't understand.

Not until that night when he stopped for a sniff at the Row Jimmy and heard Stella Blue playing in the corner for mere nixons. He had always scoffed at the guitar as a derelict of time, maddeningly lacking in complexity, and totally incapable of nuances

and subtleties.

Then he heard Stella Blue.

A broken angel sang from her guitar, through all the broken dreams and vanished hopes. He heard the winds of time; he felt the weight of agelessness upon the immortals. Her guitar was crying like the wind, down every lonely street that had ever been. She played the legendary music of Radcliffe as Garcia had never heard it played before, the simple uncomplex music that Radcliffe had composed before he and the mythical Tom had invented the first autar, and she played it with a despair and sense of loss that struck even the emotionless Garcia.

"Who is she?" he asked the tender when he found his voice again.

"Stella Blue."

"Is that her real name?"

The tender shrugged. "Stella Blue she calls herself; Stella Blue we credit her; and Stella Blue the computer accepts. Stella Blue she is now, whatever she was before. We don't question here, stranger."

Stella Blue finished playing and left the stage. Garcia shouldered his way through the crowd, oblivious to the insults he was collecting, and reached the girl before she could leave by a side door, grabbing her by the elbow.

"Can I buy you a sniff, Miss?"

She pulled away from him. "No, thank you.." Her depthless gray eyes stared past him as if he wasn't there.



"Look, please join me, Miss. I . . ."

A gorilla stepped between him and Stella Blue, and she drifted through the doorway.

"You don't hear the lady, stranger?"

"I didn't mean anything. I'm Garcia; I could make her famous."

"And pulp I could make you," the gorilla said.

Garcia knew he had lost the battle.

HIS CONSOLE was of little help. "No Stella Blue is listed," it told him.

He had half expected it. He stood at the window, staring out at the luminescent river flowing several dozen floors below him, underlighting the bridges and buildings. "No Stella Blue?" he repeated. "Nowhere?"

"No listing is in the public file."

Garcia picked up his favorite autar and keyed a basic grilly progression, playing his own counterpoint on the strings while the instrument's computer adjusted its own timing and harmony to his melody. After a few bars, he began plucking strings idly, hitting keys at random while the computer tried frantically to find a pattern in his idle strumming. He put it down. Even the autar couldn't calm him tonight.

The display case containing the ancient autar that had supposedly been played by Radcliffe himself caught his eye. The old instrument was one of Garcia's prize

possessions, a conversation piece, a status symbol. As an instrument, Garcia found it hopelessly inadequate, barely more complex than a mere guitar.

He unlocked the case and took out the ancient instrument.

There was only one fretboard and the computer used punched cards rather than keyed input. It was much more limited than a modern autar's computer. Garcia turned the instrument over idly in his hands, oddly moved by this link with the past in a way he had never felt before. It had been only a few years earlier that a timedipper had stumbled across Radcliffe and thus proved that he had actually existed, although certainly many of the stories about him were apocryphal. The girl had played several Radcliffe compositions and others that Garcia hadn't recognized, probably her own.

He inserted one of the punched cards that had come with the instrument into its reader and powered it up. A steady rhythm with a treble harmony began. This instrument was not one to follow the performer; the player had to follow the computer. Garcia began to play, amused by the prospect. It was not as easy as he had expected, but the music was good; he made very few mistakes the first time through, and none the second. Then he began playing the strings separately, two against the bass, three against the treble, another against the bass,

building a complex line that the original designer of the instrument would never have thought possible.

At last, contented and pleased with himself, he powered the instrument down. There had been resonances in the wood that he would never have been able to obtain with a modern instrument. Gently, like a lover with a new-found mate, he caressed the instrument, turning it over again, examining it for the first time in years. The builder's name, Raymond, was on the head. He wondered who Raymond was, what he had looked like, what his last name was. Perhaps he had been a friend of Radcliffe's; if Radcliffe had truly played this instrument, then maybe he had been. Garcia toyed with the idea of asking the timedippers to check into it, but he knew it was too trivial for such a waste of energy.

He returned the autar to its case, promising himself to play it more often in the future.

IT WAS two nights before he could get back to the Row Jimmy, and he half-expected she would be gone when he got there. But she was still on the tiny corner stage, as if she had never left. He tried to reach her while she was still playing, but the same gorilla stopped him just before he reached the stage.

"The performer's not to be disturbed, stranger."

"I just want to request a song."

"Requests she doesn't take."

"I'd like her to play Radcliffe's Concerto for Guitar," Garcia insisted, hoping she would hear him.

"Requests she doesn't take," the gorilla repeated.

"Just this once," Garcia said. "Radcliffe's Concerto for Guitar," he said again, louder.

She looked grayly at him, and stopped playing. "I don't play that any more," she said softly.

The sadness in her voice, just this side of tears, touched the heartless Garcia. "I'm sorry," he said.

"Requests she doesn't take," the gorilla said again. "I told you."

Garcia stumbled away.

HE LEFT the fashionably shabby neighborhood of the Row Jimmy and returned to the faceless facade of the main city, going straight to Computer Central. A computer aide, wired directly into the computer, took his request for Stella Blue's true name.

"That information is restricted," the aide said. "You are not on the authorized list."

Garcia looked up at the aide, whose torso disappeared into a metal-bright cabinet that placed him slightly higher than Garcia. "But she does have another name?" he asked.

"That I don't know, and I couldn't tell you if I did," the aide said. "I can only tell you that all information on Stella Blue is re-

stricted." The aide looked stonily at him from copper-colored eyes. "Just as all information on the private life of a classical autar player by the name of Garcia is restricted. You understand, I'm sure."

"But that's just it! I'm sure she'd love to talk to me if I could get to her. I can make her famous."

"You're not authorized."

"But don't you understand? I'm Garcia."

The aide looked at him distantly. "There is no more I can do for you, sir. If you wish to discuss it with my superiors, a request you can key in at the public console to your left. Next, please."

But fame, like rank, has its privileges, and information sources, even if they are computers, have their back doors. Garcia had not really expected any better treatment at Computer Central, any more than he had expected to learn anything when he had originally queried the computer from his own console. But he needed to make the attempt, if only to convince himself that he was forced to take the next step.

He entered the office of his last teacher, Bwire, who now was in charge of the conservatory. He outlined the story to the old man and waited while Bwire looked at him with a steadiness that unnerved the rocksteady Garcia.

"I've never seen you liked this," Bwire said in a strong crystalline voice. "For ten years I've

known you, my boy, and never has anyone or anything touched that granite heart of yours."

"That's not true," Garcia protested. "The autar has been my life, my dream. The autar has been my heart, my soul. You know that."

"A cold, passionless love, though, it has been."

Garcia shook his head. "I don't understand that. You're wrong. You're like those people who say my playing lacks passion."

The old man paused again to look steadily at Garcia. He smiled. "Perhaps," he said, almost under his breath. "Perhaps. Well, tell me, my boy, is your . . . feeling for this Stella Blue anything like your love for the autar?"

"No, of course not. This is irrational. I can't control it. It's eating me up. I don't understand it."

Bwire made a steeple with his hands. "I see." The smile reached his eyes. "Hopes I had for you, Garcia. My best pupil you were. The greatest autar player ever I once thought you would be. Lately I have not been so sure."

"What do you mean? Of course, I'm the best. Everyone says so."

"Not everyone. Never mind. My mind I have changed again. There is still hope for you."

"You're talking in riddles," Garcia grumbled, thinking that the old man was becoming senile.

"Never mind. Why did you tell me all this? I know you better than to think you came here just

to unburden your heart."

Garcia shifted uncomfortably in his chair. "Well, I know that you have access to restricted information . . ." Bwire raised a white eyebrow. "I mean, in your position as head of the school. . ."

"Some restricted information you want me to obtain for you?" the old man asked quietly.

"Just to find out where Stella Blue lives. What her real name is."

Bwire looked at Garcia for a long moment, longer than any of his previous pauses. At last he smiled a quiet, secret, enigmatic smile and nodded his head. "Perhaps I will. Perhaps I will." The statement was barely more than a whisper, more to himself than to Garcia. He stared at his desk for another moment then turned to his console and keyed in a request. He watched the display, which was hidden from Garcia.

There was something different in his gaze when he looked again at Garcia, a something mixed of pity and indecision. "Do you know who N'kwenze is?" he asked. Garcia shook his head. "You should. You're remarkably lacking in general knowledge outside of your own narrow interests, do you know that?"

"Does it matter?"

"It does, but you won't believe me. Not yet. If you did, that question you wouldn't have to ask."

"Look, just tell me her name, where she lives. That's all I ask."

"The timedipper who discovered Radcliffe was N'kwenze. She fell in love with him, and he with her. After she returned to our time, several pieces for the guitar he wrote and then the autar invented. Suicide, he committed less than ten years after she left him, still despondent over her disappearance."

Garcia said nothing. Bwire had always been given to rambling but it seemed to have gotten worse with age. Sooner or later, he knew, Bwire would give him the information he sought.

"N'kwenze is Stella Blue," Bwire said quietly.

GARCIA didn't think that there was any place in the city more decrepit than the area where the Row Jimmy was located, but he was wrong. Garcia had grown up in sheltered affluence, a prodigy whose every whim was carefully considered, often fulfilled.

Where N'kwenze lived was centuries old, with combination locks instead of personal locks. Parts of the buildings, like parts of Garcia's ancient autar, were made of wood. The bright shadowless streets and boulevards of the main city to which he was accustomed had not yet reached this section. Shadows seemed to creep out of corners, attempting to catch unsuspecting passersby. The buildings disappeared in the haze above the streetlamps. The dark-

ness called to Garcia, lured him to explorations, even as it frightened him with visions of violence.

He found her address and rode the ancient elevator to her floor. There was no doorchime or voice-box, but Bwire had anticipated that and had explained the ancient tradition of "knocking" to Garcia.

Garcia "knocked."

"Who is it?"

"You don't know me. I saw you at the Row Jimmy a couple of nights ago . . ."

"How did you find me?" The voice, which had been soft and timorous at first, was now hard and distant.

"I'm Garcia. I have connections."

"Go away."

Garcia wondered if the gorilla was with her. "I know it's no business of mine, but I just want to talk with you."

"I don't want to talk to anyone."

"I'm not leaving."

"I'll call the police."

Garcia laughed. "You forget who I am, and who you are."

"There are other people who will help me."

"You'd call them?" It was a bluff; she didn't seem like the kind of person who'd intentionally have someone else hurt.

After a long pause, she asked. "What do you want to talk to me about?"

For a moment, Garcia was at a

loss for words, since he really didn't know himself. At last he said, "Your playing. You're . . . you're incredible."

"You can hear me tonight."

"It's not that. Please. Please talk to me."

He heard her sigh, then the rattle of a chain being released, another, and the door opened.

Her room belonged to another century. An old-fashioned double bed, with rumpled sheets, dominated the room. A rickety old chair, a set of drawers, and a flat television were the other main pieces of furniture. A picture of a smiling young man was on the small bedside table. There was no computer console.

She sat down on the bed and motioned him over to the chair. As he sat down, he noticed the guitar case next to the chair. She watched him as he stared at the room.

"It's Twentieth Century American. Latter half," she said at last. "I used to be a timedipper," she said quietly.

"I know."

"You know?" she asked sharply.

"You're N'kwenze, the one who found Radcliffe."

"Then you know everything."

The despair, the resignation in her voice touched the wakening Garcia. "I don't know what you mean."

"Please leave me alone."

"I can help you."

"I don't need your help. I don't need anyone's help. Dick is dead,

and I might as well be."

"I don't understand. Why don't you go back?"

"And change the timestream? It can't be done. And even if it could, they wouldn't let me." She got up. "Here. Have you seen this?" She had picked up a cassette.

"What is it?"

She inserted it into her TV and turned down the lights. Garcia watched as a man grown old and haggard before his time played an ancient autar. His technique was clumsy and simplistic, but there was a raw power that Garcia almost envied. When he was finished, the audience that had been watching him applauded for a long time. He stood in front of them, his gray-streaked head bowed. The camera moved closer and Garcia could see the lines, the crow's-feet, the despair.

"That was Dick's last concert," she said. "Another timedipper attended it while on another assignment, and made that tape for me."

"I see." The performance had affected him much as Stella Blues guitar-playing had.

"He wasn't even forty-five." She turned away from him, her body tense, her hands balled into fists. Then she said quietly, almost inaudibly, "He committed suicide the next day."

"You can't live in the past," he said, wondering why he was doing this, why he was in this decrepit room, trying to reach a really

quite plain woman when there were plenty of others who would beg for his attention.

"Is that what you came here for? To tell me I can't live in the past?"

"No. I . . . I . . ." The glib Garcia was at a loss for words, not quite knowing what to say.

"What did you *really* come here for?"

Garcia sighed. "I'm not sure. You just fascinate me. I'm not sure why."

"Necrophilia," she said bitterly. "You're just like the others."

"No, no, that's not it at all. I knew nothing about any of this when I first saw you. But you just . . . you're different somehow, and your music disturbs me, touches me somehow."

She smiled sadly. "I see," she said, nodding her head. "I think it would best if you left now."

"No, please. When can I see you again?"

"Never."

SHE DID NOT RETURN to the Row Jimmy and when Garcia went to her room again, she was gone. He enlisted Bwire's help once more.

"It's you again," she said when he arrived at her new address, which was not much different from her previous quarters.

"I'll hunt you to the ends of the Earth."

"That won't be necessary."

Their conversation was as fruitless as the earlier one and Garcia

was on the street again after a few minutes. He stood there, tasting the icy knife-edge of impending violence that seemed to hang over this section of town. He was becoming used to it now and he no longer felt the urge to hasten back to more familiar territory. The shadows and ancient lighting reached into him and touched deep anticipations and memory traces. Ghosts of the past beckoned to him from the shadows, and echoes of forgotten songs lingered in the air.

The door to Stella Blue's building opened and the girl came out. She did not see him standing in the shadows. He started forward then remembered their fruitless meeting and stayed back, following her, keeping to the shadows though she never looked back.

She came to the river and dove in, pausing only to take off her shoes. Garcia thought of the strong undertow of the sluggish main current, stripped, and dove after her.

If there were any words exchanged between the two of them in that cold and phosphorescent river, they are lost and forgotten. Garcia caught up to her as she was tiring, tried to get her to head back to shore. But a third joined them, an inanimate third, one of the rivercleaners, its maw full of teeth and blades for the shredding of large river debris. He tried to pull the girl away from its path but she struggled. The suction action of the river-

cleaner pulled them inexorably into its mouth, spinning them around each other until Garcia hit its edge. He felt as if a razor were cutting him apart, then he was pulled free. Pain washed over him and he knew no more.

HE AWOKE at last after a jumbled series of vague memories of anaesthetic smells, of green-masked surgeons, of fresh-scrubbed rubber and plastic. He awoke to the smiling, seamed face of a doctor.

"Ah, me Jocko, 'tis good to have you back with the living," the doctor said expansively. "'Tis not to worry. An arm, an arm. What's an arm?"

"An arm?" Garcia asked groggily.

"So much worse it could have been. 'Tis hard we worked for such a famous man. 'Tis not to worry. See?" He took off his own arm and thrust it under Garcia's nose. "Only your prosthetician will know for sure." He turned the arm around for Garcia's inspection, admiring it himself. "More delicacy, more control, more finesse than the biological model." He thrust another arm in Garcia's face. This one terminated in a surgical saw, a pair of pincers, and a surgical needle. "'Tis a poorer surgeon I'd be otherwise. To cut, to slice, to sew, so." He slashed the air in front of Garcia's nose with the surgical arm, then stood back and smiled warmly. "So, you see, me lad, 'tis no

tragedy. 'Tis a blessing, in truth."

BWIRE WAS SADDER, more morose, when he visited Garcia. "Her name I should never have given you. A one-armed autar player? My hopes, my dreams, all dashed and shattered."

And then the girl visited him, a bitter smile on her face:

"You saved my life, didn't you?" he asked. "Why?"

The bitter smile turned on itself and a fleeting pain crossed her face. "I killed one man already. I couldn't let it happen again." She stared at the floor, looking like a shattered and forgotten doll. Garcia wanted desperately to embrace her, to hold her, console her, make her happy.

And with that desire, he remembered the stump of an arm at his shoulder, and he shared her bitterness. "Maybe you should have let me die," he said.

She looked at him, full of an understanding he had lacked. "Maybe. But I couldn't do it again. Anyway, the doctor says your new arm will be better than the original one. You'll have more control than ever before."

"It won't be the same," he said.

"No. I suppose not."

SHE WALKED along a river of melted sherbet: lime and raspberry eddied in scallops beside the sluggish main current of phosphorescent orange streaked with a rich brown chocolate. It glowed on the underside of the

bridge, lighting her face from below.

Who could know her thoughts as she stood on that bridge? Perhaps she remembered a time when some rivers still ran clear, when there were still a few people who walked slowly and savored the salt breeze, not rushing madly in search of new experiences already old. Perhaps she remembered a time of gentleness and love, the warmth of a strong man with a red mustache, the weakness of a sandy-haired dreamer. Perhaps she thought that if she had wings, the turgid air would support her despite the claims of physicists. But she had no wings and it is more likely that she knew her flight would be that of a stone.

When they told Garcia of her death, his face took on a granitic mien it never again quite lost. He turned around and walked away.

A colleague found him several months later, playing a guitar in a shabby club called the Row Jimmy. His playing was awkward, clumsy, and ragged . . . but it had a poignancy and depth that his autar-playing had never had.

IDEALLY, the story should end there. But life is not as neat and tidy as art. Garcia was more stable than Radcliffe or N'kwenze. Six months later, he was back on the classical stage and no one could deny, however grudgingly, that he was now the best classical autar player. His line was still as

(cont. on page 130)

Jeff Jones has established himself among the finest artist-illustrators of our field and our time—one whose work we are always pleased to publish. Now he moves into a new area—the written word. And in one thousand precisely chosen words he tells a remarkably compressed story. This is Jeff's first fiction sale—but will surely not be his last.



I HANG, suspended, swaying beneath my ballute, swinging as if the hangman had just released the trapdoor. The universe is all around and below now is brilliant Venus. I had completed three orbits before the explosion hung the stars on my arms. Three orbits of precious data which now spirals down ahead of me toward Venus, the virgin.

And I remember back to Earth and to midnight and to when a ten year old boy had lain frozen in fear in the night with his first realization that the universe is all there is. But he'd never told anyone. The terrible secret was his. He'd never told anyone a lot of things.

I remember the quiet, layered between the interruptions of the radio. The stars blazed like ice beyond the window and Venus was a torch in the night, as my module screamed silently toward its goal. My hands moved across the panel around me, clicking, thumping, adjusting, like dismembered parts, trained in some unforgotten skill—roll, correct, pressure stabilization, radio too loud, trajectory check, chronometer reading; man and machine, a june-bug spinning on a string of gravity, sensing and recording.

THE BOYS had run, yelling and bumping, toward the creek. "Last one in's a rotten egg!" Down they

had tumbled, cheeks flushed, breath quickened, lazurite and chocolate eyes laughing, into the moss-slick rocks and cold, dancing water.

He had been the rotten egg, as usual. The others had jeered and splashed him while holding their noses in mock derision.

I hang here with the universe strung out all around and my own string of gravity, with ever increasing speed, inevitably reeling me in. Venus is much closer now; the pull of 0.82 mass is beginning to draw my body out.

From this proximity Venus is more than a white ball; the many densities in the cloud layer and their reflective variances give it a swirling, mottled effect. It's like some great, fluid marble surging with fantastic convections—the values swarming like a time-lapse sky.

THE BOY had always loved caves. On this day he had sat in his secret cave, huddled among his secret thoughts and dreams. He heard the laughter of the other boys floating in on an unseasonal breeze. But in his darkness he could not be disturbed. Today he wouldn't be the last one chosen when teams were picked.

To him caves had been places to hide and forget who you were, and to dream of who you might be and what you might do. Caves had been places to be alone, a million miles from humanity.

Increased computer orientation

gave me the first one-man spacecraft. I wasn't really aware of the stars until Earth orbit was broken. Millions, billions—an infinity of stars; what was it Ober had said—"then why isn't the night sky as bright as the day?"

That was all before the explosion.

The great, unexplored planet Venus is now pushing across most of space. The stars are blinking out as molecules of atmosphere begin to thicken around me. Am I sorry for myself? No. I am smiling.

Halfway out from earth the first touches of an incredible sorrow reached for me. It was a sorrow from the past—one of aloneness and of friends never made.

I laughed to myself. It was a bitter laugh. Here I was, out in space in my cave. Was I always destined to be a rotten egg? I was alone out here, but many men had come out into space and at this very moment I was the last.

I could talk to the radio, but it only mocked my aloneness in a wash of solid state static. I guess that's when I started talking to myself.

BY THE AGE OF TEN the stars had become a great mystery in his life. He had stood on clear summer nights in awe and wonder, staring at the perpetual sky. It had been one night that summer that he had decided that he belonged out there, that he would find his destiny out there. And

(cont. on page 125)

The erjins were fierce beasts much larger in size than men, and the enemies of all humans upon Koryphon. How, then, were the Wind-runners able to tame them and sell them to the rich as servants? And what was the "wonderful joke" Uther Madduc has discovered when he explored the Wind-runners' secret domains?

THE DOMAINS OF KORYPHON

**JACK VANCE
(CONCLUSION)**

Illustrated by MICHAEL NALLY

SYNOPSIS

The space age is thirty thousand years old. Men have moved from star to star in search of wealth and glory; the Gaean Reach encompasses a perceptible fraction of the galaxy. Trade routes thread space like capillaries in living tissue; thousands of worlds have been colonized, each different from every other, each working its specific change upon those men who live there. Never has the human race been less homogeneous.

The outward surge has been anything but regular or even. Men have come and gone in waves and fluctuations, responding to wars, to religious impetus, to compulsions totally mysterious.

The world Koryphon is typical only in the diversity of its inhabitants. On the continent Uaia, the Uldras inhabit that wide band along the southern lit-

toral known as the Alouan, while to the north the Wind-runners sail their two- and three-masted wagons across the Palga plateau. Both are restless nomadic peoples; in almost every other respect they differ. South across the Persimmon Sea the equatorial continent Szintarre is inhabited by a cosmopolitan population of Outkers*, distinguished from both Uldras and Wind-runners by several orders of sociological magnitude.

Considered indigenous to Koryphon are a pair of quasi-intelligent races: the erjins and the morphotes. The Wind-runners domesticate and offer for sale erjins of a particularly massive and docile variety, or perhaps they breed and train ordinary erjins to such characteristics. The Wind-runners are secretive in this regard, inasmuch as the trade provides them wheels, bearings and rigging for their wind-wagons. Certain

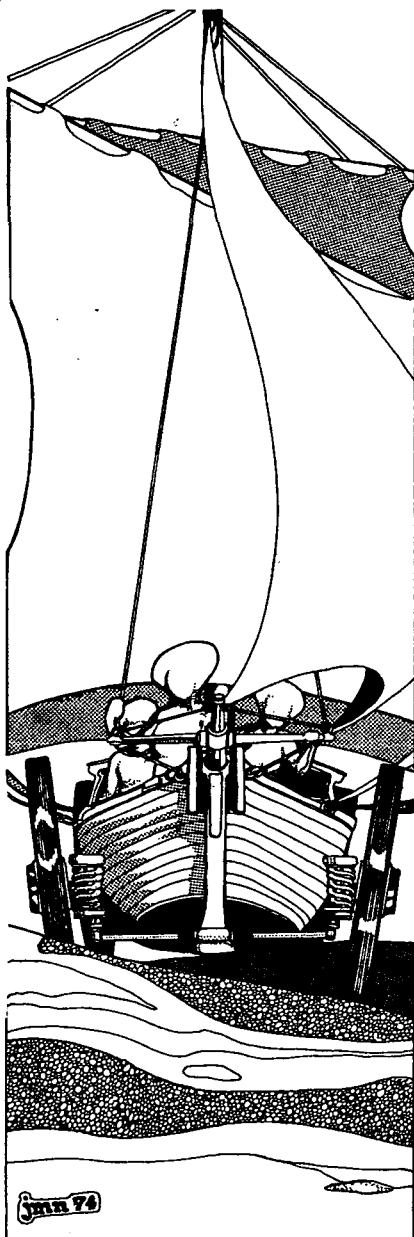
*Outker: The general term for tourists, visitors, recent immigrants: essentially all persons other than Uldra or Wind-runner.

Uldras of the Alouan capture, mount and ride wild erjins, controlling their ferocity with electric curbs. Both domesticated and wild erjins have telepathic capacity, by which they communicate with each other and with a few Wind-runner adepts. Unrelated to the erjins are the morphotes, a malicious, perverse and unpredictable race, esteemed only for their weird beauty. At Olanje on Szintarre the Outkers have gone so far as to form morphote-viewing clubs, a recreation all the more titillating for the macabre habits of the morphotes.

Two hundred years ago a group of off-planet free-booters dropped down upon Uaia, surprised and captured a conclave of Uldra chieftains and compelled cession of title to certain tribal lands: the notorious Submission Treaties. In such a fashion each member of the company acquired a vast tract ranging from twenty thousand to sixty thousand square miles. In due course these tracts became the great 'domains' of the Alouan, upon which the 'land-barons' and their descendants lived large and expansive lives in mansions built on a scale to match the holdings.

The tribes signatory to the Submission Treaties found their lives affected to no great extent: if anything, improved. The new dams, ponds and canals provided dependable sources of water; inter-tribal warfare was proscribed and the domain clinics provided at least a modicum of medical care. A few Uldras attended domain schools and trained to become clerks, storekeepers and domestic servants; others took jobs as ranch-hands.

In spite of such improvement, many Uldras resented the simple fact of inferior status. On a subconscious



and unacknowledged level but perhaps a source of equal exacerbation was the land-barons' disinclination for the Uldra females. A certain amount of rape or seduction, while resented, might have been accepted as a sordid but inevitable adjunct to the conquest. In point of fact, while the Uldra men, with their tall nervous physiques, gray skins dyed ultramarine blue and aquiline features, were in general personable, the same could not be said for the women. The girls, squat and fat, with their scalps shaved bald against the onslaught of vermin, lacked charm. As they matured, they retained their heavy hips and short legs, but elongated their torsos, arms and faces. The typically long Uldra nose became a drooping icicle; the gray skins became muddy; the hair, vermin or not, was allowed to grow into a heavy orange nimbus. Toward these Uldra girls and women the Outker land-barons* maintained a scrupulously correct indifference, which eventually, by a paradoxical reverse-effect, came to be regarded by the Uldras as a humiliation and an insult.

South across the Persimmon Sea lay the long narrow island Szintarre and its pleasant capitol Olanje, a fashionable resort for out-worlders. These folk, sophisticated, urbane, articulate, had little in common with the land-barons whom they regarded as pompous martinets, without style, grace or humor.

At Olanje in an eccentric old edifice known as Holrude House sat Koryphon's single organ of government: the Mull, a council of

thirteen notables. The Mull's charter asserted control across Szintarre and Uaia alike, but in practice it avoided any interest in Uaian affairs. The land-barons considered the Mull an organ for the production of inconsequential sophistry; the Treaty Uldras were apathetic; the Retent Uldras rejected even the theory of centralized authority; the Wind-runners were ignorant of the Mull's very existence.

The cosmopolitan population of Olanje generated for itself an almost hyperactive intellectualism. Social activity was incessant; committees and societies existed to accomodate almost any special interest: a yacht club; several artists' associations; the Morphote-Watchers; the Szintarre Hussade Association; the Library of Gaeen Musical Archives; an association to sponsor the annual fête: Parilia; a college of the dramatic arts; Dionys: that organization dedicated to hyperaesthesia. Other groups were philanthropic or altruistic, such as the Ecological Foundation, which enjoined the importation of alien flora and fauna, no matter how economically useful or aesthetically gratifying. The Redemptionist Alliance crusaded against the Submission Treaties; they advocated dissolution of the Uaian domains and return of the lands to the Treaty tribes. The Society for the Emancipation of the Erjin, or SEE, asserted that erjins were intelligent beings and might not legally be enslaved. The SEE was possibly the most controversial organization of Olanje, inasmuch as an increasing number of erjins was being imported from the Palga for domestic service, farm

*No satisfactory equivalent for the word *eng'sharatz* (literally: the revered master of a large domain) exists. 'Baron' or 'lord' implies a formal aristocracy; a 'squire' is master of a small property; 'rancher' implies emphasis upon agricultural activity. 'Land-baron' is awkward and somewhat labored but is perhaps closer to the sense of *eng'sharatz* than any other term.

labor, garbage pick-up and the like. Other less disputatious groups sponsored education and employment for Uldras immigrant to Szintarre from Uaia. These Uldras, derived in about equal proportion from Retent and Treaty tribes, tended to excoriate the land-barons. Often their grievances were real; often they complained from sheer petulance. The Redemptionists sometimes brought Uldra immigrants before the Mull, the better to prod that often discursive, airy, didactic and capricious group into action. With practiced skill the Mull fended off such importunities or appointed a study commission, which invariably reported the Treaty lands to be havens of peace compared to the Retent, where the independent tribes conducted feuds, raids, assassinations, retaliations, outrages, massacres, atrocities and ambushes. The Redemptionists declared such considerations to be irrelevant. The Treaty tribes, so they pointed out, had been deprived of their ancestral lands through violence and deceit. The perpetuation of such a condition was intolerable, nor could the passage of two hundred years legitimize an originally wrongful situation. Most residents of Szintarre tended generally to endorse the Redemptionist doctrine.

SCHAINED MADDUC has returned to Koryphon after an absence of five years—time spent off-world following an explosive scene with her father, UTHER MADDUC over her relationship with MUFFIN, an Uldra Blue who was raised from infancy at Morningswake Manor and whose bravery in saving her brother KELSE from a near-fatal attack by an erjin had kindled in her a gratitude close to love.

She finds that things have changed

somewhat. In Olanje, the rich have “tame” erjin servants (trained and sold to them by the Wind-Runners), and the Redemptionists are pressing the Outker land-barons (of whom Uther Madduc is one) far more strongly. At a party at her AUNT VAL’s the afternoon of her arrival on planet, Schaine meets Muffin again—to find that he is now “The Gray Prince,” a leader among dissident Uldras, and a young man of considerable political power. He has allied himself with the Redemptionists—among whom Schaine meets ELVO GLISSAM. Her brother’s close friend and a neighboring land-baron, GERD JEMASZE, is also in attendance. Schaine finds the two a contrast. Elvo is a pleasant, personable man—and one whom she finds herself attracted to. Jemasze is terse, withdrawn, and has the arrogance to be too often correct in his assessment of situations. He annoys her greatly.

Kelse speaks of a letter from their father, whom they are to meet. It says in part, “I’ve had some remarkable adventures and I have a wonderful story to tell you, a most wonderful joke, a most prodigious and extraordinary joke, which has put ten years on my life . . . I’ll meet you at Galigong. I don’t dare come to Olanje, which would mean suffering through one of Valtrina’s awful parties, complete with all the puss-footers, logic-choppers, aesthetes, four-flushers, sybarites and sycophants in Szintarre. Make sure Gerd comes back to Morningswake with us; he, no less than you, will appreciate this situation, and express to Schaine my great pleasure at having her home once again. . . .”

A group is made up—Schaine, Kelse, Gerd and Elvo—to fly to

Galigong, but Uther Madduc does not meet them there, and when they continue to Morningswake they find his wrecked aircar, the victim of Sky Sharks, and are themselves beset by the rebel Blues, grounded, and forced to go on by foot the last one hundred miles to Morningswake Manor.

Uther Madduc is dead, and with him has perished the secret of his "wonderful joke." But Kelse, Gerd and Elvo are determined to backtrack his journey up on the Palga among the Wind-runners, and travelling with them is KURGECH, the foreman of the Aos who work at Morningswake Manor.

Chapter VII

THE SKY-CAR flew north across a land of low hills, wide valleys, winding streams, forests of gadroon, flame-tree, mangoneel, an occasional giant Uaian jinko. Elvo Glissam rode with a feeling of unreality, already dubious in regard to his bravado of the night before. He glanced back the way they had come. . . . By no means, he told himself firmly; he had joined himself to the expedition for good and sufficient reasons: to examine the basic facts of erjin enslavement, a course of action to which he was impelled by moral commitment. And another more visceral reason. What Gerd Jemasze could do, he could do. Elvo Glissam looked across the car. He was perhaps an inch taller than Gerd Jemasze. Gerd was broader in the shoulders, heavier in the chest, decisive, definite

and efficient in his movements; he used no unnecessary flourishes nor any of those idiosyncratic gestures which gave flavor to a personality. In fact, at first impression, and perhaps second and third, Gerd Jemasze's personality was spare, drab, grim and colorless; he evinced neither dash nor flair nor pungency. Elvo Glissam's own attitude toward the world was optimistic, positive, constructive: Koryphon, indeed the whole of the Gaean Reach, needed improvement and only through the efforts of well-meaning folk could these changes be effected. Gerd Jemasze, while sufficiently courteous and considerate, could never be called a sympathetic individual and he certainly viewed the cosmos through a lens of egocentricity. By this same token, Gerd Jemasze was superbly self-assured; the possibility of failure in any undertaking whatever obviously had never crossed his mind, and Elvo felt a twinge of envy, or irritation, or even a faint sense of dislike—which he instantly realized to be petty and unworthy. If only Gerd were less arrogant in his unconscious assumptions, less innocent—for Gerd Jemasze's impervious self-confidence after all, could be nothing less than naivete. In hundreds of capabilities he would show to poor advantage indeed. He knew next to nothing of human achievement in the realms of music, mathematics, literature, optics, philosophy. By any ordi-

nary consideration, Gerd Jemasze should feel uneasy and resentful in regard to Elvo Glissam, not the reverse. Elvo Glissam managed a sour chuckle. The situation was as it was, for better or worse. Once again he looked down at the terrain passing below. They would still take him back, if he so requested, perhaps pleading illness. Gerd Jemasze's reaction would only be mild puzzlement; he wouldn't care enough one way or the other to feel disgust. . . Elvo scowled. Enough of all this self-pity and hand-wringing. He'd do his best to be a competent companion; if he failed, he failed and that was that; he refused to think any more about it.

Gerd Jemasze pointed down to where three enormous gray beasts wallowed in a mudhole. One stood erect and shambled ashore, to stare vacuously up at the sky-car.

"Armored sloths," said Gerd Jemasze. "Close cousins to the morphotes. Evolution left them far behind."

"But no relation to the erjins."

"None whatever. Some people say the erjins developed from the mountain gergoid: half-rat half-scorpion; other people say no. Erjins don't leave fossils."

The sky-car slid north. Ahead loomed the Palga, with the Volwodes stabbing the sky to the west. Gerd Jemasze took the sky-car higher, to fly just below the vast cumulus pillars which basked in the sunlight. The

ground below heaved and rolled as if under pressure, then suddenly thrust up three thousand feet, the face of the scarp eroded into thousands of spurs and ravines. Beyond, far off and away across sunny distances, extended the Palga.

Close by the brink of the escarpment clustered a dozen white-washed buildings with black-brown roofs. "No. 2 Depot," said Gerd Jemasze succinctly. "You'll probably see some export erjins. . . It won't help to express your outrage."

Elvo managed a good-natured laugh. "I'm here as an observer only." He now reflected that he had never heard Gerd Jemasze voice an opinion one way or another on the matter of erjin enslavement. "What of yourself? What do you feel about the business?"

Gerd Jemasze considered a moment or two. "Personally, I wouldn't care to be a slave." He stopped talking and after a moment Elvo saw that he intended to express no further opinion—perhaps because he had formed none. Then, frowning at his own insensitivity, Elvo corrected this thinking. Gerd Jemasze had a subtle way of implying his point of view, and it would appear that he had expressed something like: "Offhand, the situation seems dirty and disreputable, but since we know so little about the total picture, I am reserving final judgment. As for the anguish of

the Olanje Labor Guilds and the hurt feelings of the Society for the Emancipation of the Erjins, I can hardly take them seriously." Elvo grinned. Such, translated into the language of Villa Mirasol, were Gerd Jemasze's opinions.

The sky-car settled into the central compound at No. 2 Depot. To the left rambled a long low irregular structure of cemented soil, white-washed, with a roof of haphazard angles and slopes supported by heavy poles: evidently an inn. Ahead, along the western edge of the compound, stood three barn-like structures, with tall doors open at front and rear to reveal a number of vehicles in the process of construction. A rack supported a dozen large light pneumatic wheels, as high as a man or higher; beyond and through the construction sheds could be glimpsed other vehicles incongruously equipped with masts, yards, booms, sprits and rigging. To the right, along the northern edge of the compound, was ranged another complex of open sheds, some containing empty cages, others fitted with screened enclosures from which a dozen erjins looked stolidly forth.

In the construction shops the workmen had halted their activity. A half-dozen came out into the compound and approached the sky-car: sturdy brown men of no great stature. Several wore what Elvo considered absolutely preposterous head-gear: horizontal

disks of wood four feet in diameter and an inch thick secured to an iron casque strapped under the chin and around the nape of the neck. How could anyone work in such ungainly contraptions? . . . Gerd Jemasze now performed a most curious act. As the workmen came closer, he picked up a small stick and scratched a circle in the dirt of the compound to enclose the sky-car. The workmen halted, then came forward more slowly, to stop at the circumference of the circle. They were the first Wind-runners Elvo had seen: representatives of a race totally different from the Uldras. Their pale brown skin seemed colored by an innate pigment, rather than by exposure to the sun, and evinced the peculiar property of showing neither shadows or highlights. Some wore cloth caps, other, disks of wood and iron casques; where hair could be seen, it showed as a tousle of pale brown curls, and was worn without evident attention to style. Their features were small and blunt except for rather heavy jaws; their eyes showed a haunting pale buff color. Certain of the men wore small mustaches; several had plucked away their eyebrows to give themselves a bland and quizzical expression. All wore short trousers of pale blue, gray or pale green, with loose shirts of similar material; all wore in their hair or on their caps what appeared to be ornaments of glass blown into intricate shapes and tied with col-

ored ribbons.

Gerd Jemasze spoke: "Good luck; fair wind to all."

The workers mumbled a responsive benediction. One asked: "Do you trade or do you buy?"

"My business has not yet been made clear to me. It will come in a dream."

The workmen nodded in comprehension and muttered to each other. Elvo gaped in surprise; he had expected no such flights of fancy from the matter-of-fact Jemasze, who now indicated the circle. "Observe this fiap. It is enforced not by Ahariszeio, but by ourselves, our fists and the sting of our guns. Is this clearly understood?"

The workmen shrugged, shuffled their feet and craned their necks to examine the sky-car and its contents.

Jemasze asked: "Where is the priest?"

"Yonder, in his compartments, beyond the inn."

Jemasze looked around at Kurgech, who leaned against the sky-car, a hand-gun significantly displayed. Jemasze turned back to the Wind-runners. "You can depart without regret; our property is neither loose nor free, but carefully guarded."

The workers made polite signs and returned to the sheds. Elvo asked in bewilderment: "What is the meaning of all that?"

"The Wind-runners steal anything they can lay their hands on," said Gerd Jemasze. "The

protective signs, or talismans, are called fiaps; you'll see them everywhere. The Wind-runners wear them in their hair."

"Why do they wear those wooden disks?"

"They've violated some sort of religious ordinance. There's no authority up here but the priesthood."

Elvo grunted. "It gives me a headache just to think about it."

"Sometimes the disks are four inches thick, or even six inches. The culprit in such a case usually dies in a week or two, unless someone takes care of him."

"What does he do to earn a disk?"

Gerd Jemasze shrugged. "Spitting against the wind. Talking in his sleep. I'm not all that familiar with Wind-runner law. Come along, we'll go find the priest and get ourselves some fiaps."

The priest wore a white gown; his hair, dyed stark black, hung to his shoulders and terminated in small onyx balls. His round face was bare of hair and he had painted black circles around his eyes, giving himself an expression of owlish intensity. He showed no surprise at the sight of Gerd Jemasze and Elvo Glissam, though he had been asleep on his couch when they entered the compartment.

Gerd Jemasze now began a conversation which once again left Elvo Glissam wilted with astonishment: "Good winds to you priest. We require a set of fiaps,

covering all phases of life."

"Indeed, indeed," said the priest. "You intend to trade? You will not need so many fiaps."

"We are not traders; we come to the Palga for pleasure and novelty."

"Hi-ho! You must be easy men to please then. We offer neither carnivals nor melodious girls nor banquets of fat flesh. For a fact, we see very few if any of your ilk."

"My friend Uther Madduc passed this way recently," said Gerd Jemasze. "He tells me that you provided him fiaps and gave him counsel."

"Not I, not I. Poliamides then held tenure. I am Moffamides."

"In that case we will pay our respects to Poliamides."

Moffamides' eyes became round and brilliant; he pursed his mouth and gave his head a shake of disapprobation. "Poliamides has proved inconstant; he has abandoned the priesthood and gone out across the sarai*. Perhaps he was unduly responsive to your friend Uther Madduc."

"In the name of Ahariszeio then, provide us fiaps, and make them strong."

The priest went to look into a black leather case lined with pink felt, where rested a dozen rock crystal spheres. He touched them, rearranged them, and jerked back with a small exclama-

tion of surprise. "The portents are unfavorable! You must return to the Alouan."

Gerd Jemasze said brusquely: "You have misused the spheres; the portents are favorable."

Moffamides turned him a sharp sidelong look, the agate beads in his black hair clicking and softly clattering. "How can you say so? Are you priests?"

Jemasze gave his head a curt shake. "Uther Madduc is dead, as you know."

Moffamides eyes bulged in apparently genuine surprise. "How should I know?"

"Through telepathy, which is one of your priestly skills, so I am told."

"In certain circumstances only, and never as to events on the Alouan, where I know no more than you of the Palga."

"Uther Madduc's ghost has laid a charge on us. He and Poliamides became companions and each for assurance allowed the other a taste of his soul."

Elvo Glissam listened in awe. And he had considered Gerd Jemasze dull and stolid!

Moffamides sat with owl eyes now half-closed and thoughtful. "I have heard nothing of this."

"You have so been told, and if we must return to the Alouan without Uther Madduc's soul, I will ask you to return with us and console his ghost."

*Sarai: Untranslatable: a limitless expanse, horizon to horizon, of land or water, lacking all impediment or obstacle to travel and projecting an irresistible urgency to be on the way, to travel toward a known or unknown destination.

"Utterly impossible," declared the priest. "I dare not leave the Palga."

"In that case we must have a few words with Poliamides."

Moffamides nodded slowly, thoughtfully, his eyes unfocused.

"First," said Gerd Jemasze, "you must provide us fiaps."

Moffamides once more became alert. "Fiaps of what nature?"

"Contrive us a fiap so that we may fly our sky-car across the Palga."

Moffamides drew down the corners of his mouth and held up his forefinger. "Belches of gas and whines of energy on the excellent winds of Ahariszeio? Unthinkable! Nor will I work you a fiap of fair venture because I am aware of bodes and umbras, and all may not go well. At best I can contrive a general talisman commending you to the mercy of Ahariszeio."

"Very good; we will accept this fiap with gratitude. Additionally, the sky-car must be protected against every manner of damage, nuisance and misfortune, including pilferage, destruction, curiosity, tampering, vandalism, defilement, removal or concealment. I want fiaps for myself and my companions, guarding us against molestation, harm, magic, beguilement, exploitation, capture or immobility, and the various stages and conditions of death. We will also need a suitable set of fiaps for our vehicle, assuring us of good winds, smooth turf, stability and fair destiny."

"You require a great deal."

"For a priest as close to Ahariszeio as yourself, our requirements are small. We could ask more."

"It is quite enough. You must pay a fee."

"We will discuss the fee on our return, after the fiaps have been proved."

Moffamides opened his mouth to speak, then closed it again. "How far do you fare?"

"As far as necessary. Where is Poliamides?"

"Not close at hand."

"You must then direct us to him."

Moffamides nodded thoughtfully. "Yes. I will give you direction and I will provide fiaps. They must be strong; and their power must not fade. Tomorrow they will be charged with force."

Gerd Jemasze gave a curt nod. "Give us now a temporary fiap to secure the sky-car, and others to guard ourselves and our belongings overnight."

"Take your sky-car behind the wagon-shops. I will bring the fiaps."

Gerd Jemasze returned to the sky-car, floated it over the wagon-shops to the indicated area: a storage lot for dozens of vehicles, of various styles and sizes, old and new, from a three-masted cargo schooner on eight ten-foot wheels, to a three-wheeled skimmer with a single unstayed mast. Attached to each was a confection of twisted glass bulbs and rods of various colors from which de-

pended ribbons long enough to drop past the side of the wagon.

Moffamides awaited them with a basket. "These are fiaps of general potency." He brought the objects forth. "This red and green fiap is standard and will guard your sky-car indefinitely. These blue and whites will secure your belongs so long as you remain at the inn. The black, green and white fiap will guard this Uldra against vengeance, malice and ghost-clutch. The two black, blue and yellow fiaps will suffice for you Outkers."

Jemasze attached the red and green fiap to the sky-car, distributed the others among Elvo, Kurgech and himself. "Quite correct," said Moffamides, and without further ceremony departed the yard.

Jemasze regarded the fiaps dubiously. "Hopefully they're operative and not just junk."

"They are good fiaps," said Kurgech. "They carry magic."

"I don't notice anything," said Elvo in a subdued voice. "I suppose my sensibilities are atrophied."

Jemasze went to inspect a tall-masted sloop on four six-foot wheels with a wicker deck and a small cabin. "All my life I've wanted to sail one of these wagons. . . This is probably too light and too small. That ketch yonder would be more suitable."

The three repaired to the inn and entered a foyer, separated by a chest-high bar of scrubbed pale

wood from the kitchen, where a stocky brown man, naked to the waist and glistening with sweat, tended a row of iron pots which bubbled and seethed on a great iron range. The three waited; the cook darted them a severe glance, and seizing a cutlass began to dice a parsnip.

Into the chamber came a young woman, tall and slender, with a face impassive as that of a somnambulist. Elvo, always on the alert for odd human variants, was instantly fascinated. With any degree of animation this young woman might have manifested a most unusual beauty, comprising the langor of a nenuphar and the elegance of some swift white winter beast. But her face was still and the beauty was absent. Or almost absent, thought Elvo; perhaps it was there, stranger than ever, by implication. Her ivory skin was paler than that of the ordinary Wind-runner and showed a most subtle luster or bloom of an indefinable color: blue? blue-green? green-violet? Her hair, dark brown, hung to her shoulders and was contained at the forehead by a black fillet with a purple, black and scarlet fiap at the back.

In a soft voice the woman asked their needs and Gerd Jemasze rather brusquely spoke for three beds, supper and breakfast, and Elvo wondered at his indelicacy. The woman stepped back, as graceful and easy as a retreating wave and signaled to them; the

three men followed her into a cavernous common room, dim and moving with mysterious shadows. Slabs of dark gray stone paved the floor; posts of smoke-stained timber supported the ceiling rafters, from which depended hundreds of barely visible fiaps. A long clerestory of a hundred purple and brown panes admitted a warm umbrous light which enhanced the quality of posts, beams and panels, enriched the dark red cloth which covered the tables, and as if by purposeful chiaroscuro dramatized the features of the other persons in the room. These were five men who sat gambling at a table, pounding with heavy fists and cursing for emphasis, while a pot-boy in a white apron served mugs of beer.

The young woman led the way across the common-room, through a short passage and out upon a balcony which seemed to overlook nothing but sky. Elvo looked over the rail. The inn had been built on the very brink of the escarpment; the balcony hung out over emptiness. Between wall and posts were strung a number of hammocks, any of which, so the woman indicated, were at the disposal of the travelers. A walkway supported by long spider-leg stilts extended over the chasm; at the far end was the privy, consisting of a bar hanging over the windy emptiness and a pipe trickling cold water. Far below could be seen the twinkle of running water, which Elvo hoped was not

the source of the Chip-chap.

THE THREE MEN brought mugs of beer out upon the balcony; a soft pale brew fragrant of Palga sunshine and wortleberries. They sat drinking while Methuen the sun went down in a cataclysm of scarlet, rose, pink and red, like a king advancing to his doom.

Silence on the balcony. The tall woman came forth with new mugs of beer, then stood a moment staring at the sunset as if never in her life had she witnessed a sight so remarkable; after a moment she stirred and returned into the common-room.

Elvo Glissam, half-intoxicated from the beer and the sunset, lost his misgivings; here, beyond question, was the richest moment of his life—and yet in such bizarre surroundings, with such inexplicable companions! Questions thronged his mind. He spoke to Kurgech: "The fiaps: do they actually control the Wind-runners?"

"They know no other control."

"What would happen if a person disobeyed a fiap?"

Kurgech made a small motion, implying that the question hardly need be asked. "The offenders suffer, and often die."

"How did you know that the priest's fiaps held magic?"

Kurgech merely shrugged.

Jemasze said, "If you live where magic is unknown, you'll never recognize it."

Elvo looked out over the sky. "I've had no experience with

magic. . . Until now."

Dusk began to blur the panorama; the woman made a stately appearance to announce that supper had been laid out. The three men followed her into the common-room and dined on saltbread, broad beans and sausage, a pickle of unknown ingredients, a salad of sweet grasses. The gamblers ignored all but their game, which was played with four-inch rods of polished wood, tipped at each end with daubs of bright color, usually, but not always, different end from end. Each player in turn took a rod from a receptacle, concealing the tips from the sight of the opposing players until, usually after deliberation, he displayed one or the other end in his rack. After each draw a discard might or might not be made into the center of the table, usually with a curse or an exclamation. The game occasioned considerable tension, with glances of surprise and frowns of calculation being exchanged between the players.

Jemasze and Kurgech presently went out to their hammocks. Elvo sat watching the game, which he found to be more complicated than first appearances suggested. The hundred and five rods were divided into twenty-one sorts, ringing the combinations of red, black, orange, white, blue, green. To start a game the rods were placed in the receptacle, which was then agitated until a rod fell horizontally down a slot which

concealed both ends. The player took the rod, examined it surreptitiously then thrust one end up through a hole in the rack on the table before him. Each player drew in turn, holding or discarding until each player had five rods protruding from his rack, these displaying a variation of colors, with another variation of colors concealed and known only to the player holding the rack. The players bet after each round of draws, meeting or raising the bets or dropping from the game as they deemed their chances warranted. Each player then drew another rod and either discarded it, or thrust it up into his rack, usually discarding one of the rods he previously held; and so until all the rods had been drawn, selected or discarded. The players now considered the discards, the colors displayed above the boxes, and with this information each attempted to calculate the colors hidden by the racks of his opponents; all of which served as a basis for a final round of bets. The players then displayed the concealed ends of their rods. The high-ranking set of rods took the accumulation of bets. Elvo, somewhat intimidated by the visceral grunts of emotion, let diffidence be the better part of curiosity and kept a respectful distance from the game; he was therefore unable to learn the hierarchy of combinations.

The young woman came forward once again to serve a mug of

unrequested beer, which Elvo was pleased to accept. He tried to catch the woman's eye so that he might have a friendly word with her when into the room came a man of most extraordinary appearance and mien. His face exhibited a range of mismatched overlarge features: an odd wide jaw, sunken cheeks, heavy cheekbones, a splayed nose, a tall round forehead, a wide flexible slit of a mouth twisted in a mindless grin. His eyes, round and pale buff, blinked and winced as if the light were uncomfortable. Long heavy arms dangled from burly shoulders; his torso was knotted and knobbed with bone and muscle; his long legs terminated in massive feet. He looked, thought Elvo, both imbecile and cunning; simple yet rich in fancy.

The gamblers saw him with little side-flicks of vision but paid him no heed; the pot-boy ignored him as if he had not existed. He approached the woman and spoke to her; then, with a soft sad grin on his face, struck her an open-handed blow on the side of the head, creating a sound which caused Elvo's stomach to churn. The woman fell to the floor; the man kicked her in the neck. An instantaneous image struck into Elvo's mind which never would leave him: the pale young woman on the floor, blood oozing from her mouth, face placid, eyes staring; the man looking down in proud delight, heavy foot raised to kick again, like a man perform-

ing a grotesque jig; the players at the table showing glittering side-glances but indifferent and remote, himself, Elvo Glissam of Olanje, sitting astounded and horrified. To his amazement he saw himself reach out, catch the foot and pull, so that the man fell sprawling, only to leap up with incredible lightness, and still smiling his soft sad smile, aim a kick for Elvo's head. Never in his life had Elvo fought with his hands; he hardly knew what to do except jerk back, so that the force of the kick thrust air against his face. In desperation he seized the foot and ran forward. The man, face suddenly contorted in dismay, hopped back with lurching foolish hops, out the door, out across the balcony, over the rail, out into the void.

With nothing better to do, Elvo tottered back to his seat. He sat panting and presently he drank from the mug of beer. The players occupied themselves with their game. The woman hobbled away. The room was quiet except for the sounds at the gaming table. Elvo rubbed his forehead and stared down into the beer. The episode evidently had been a hallucination. . . For several minutes Elvo sat immobile. An odd thought occurred to him: the man had worn no fiaps, no talismans of protection. Elvo thoughtfully finished the mug of beer, then rose to his feet and went out to his hammock.

Chapter VIII

IN THE MORNING no reference was made to the episode. The inn-keeper served a breakfast of bread, tea and cold meat, and took coins from Gerd Jemasze in settlement of the account. The three departed Sailmaker's Inn, crossed the compound to the area behind the workshops. The sky-car rested as they had left it. Jemasze turned his attention to the sail wagons. At a big eight-wheeled beer-cart, with three masts, a multiplicity of yards, shrouds, sprits and halyards, he merely glanced; the six-wheeled and four-wheeled house-wagons he gave more consideration. Their pneumatic wheels stood eight feet tall; the house hung on spring suspensions with less than two feet of ground clearance; most were rigged as schooners or two-masted brigantines; like the cargo-wagons, they seemed more adapted to passages down the monsoon winds than to speed or maneuverability. Jemasze turned his attention to a land-yawl about thirty feet long, with four independently sprung wheels, a flat bed with a pair of cuddies fore and aft. The shop foreman had been unobtrusively watching; now he came forward to ascertain Jemasze's requirements, and the two engaged in negotiations which occupied the better part of an hour. Jemasze finally obtained a rental rate for the land-yawl at a figure he considered tolerable,

and the shop foreman went off to find sails for the craft. Jemasze and Kurgech returned to the inn to buy provisions, while Elvo transferred luggage and personal belongings from the sky-car to the land-yawl.

Moffamides the priest sauntered across the yard. "You have selected a good wagon for your journey," he told Elvo. "Sound and stiff, fast and easy."

Elvo Glissam politely acquiesced in the priest's judgment. "What kind of sail-wagon did Uther Madduc use?"

Moffamides' eyes went blank. "A wagon somewhat similar, so I would suppose."

Several men came forth from the shop with sails which they proceeded to bind to the masts. Moffamides watched with an air of benign approval. Elvo wondered whether he should refer to the events of the night before, which now seemed totally unreal. Some kind of conversation seemed in order. He counterfeited a tone of ease and lightness. "My home is in Szintarre; at Olanje, actually. I've become interested in the erjins. How in the world do you tame such creatures?"

Moffamides slowly turned his head and inspected Elvo through heavy-lidded eyes. "The process is complicated. We start with erjin cubs and train them to our commands."

"I assumed as much, but how can a ferocious beast become a semi-intelligent domestic ser-

vant?"

"Ha ha! The ferocious beasts are semi-intelligent at the start! We convince them that they live better as Uldra mounts than as starvelings running naked across the desert, and better still as Outker house-servants."

"Then you communicate with them?"

Moffamides raised his eyes to the sky. "To some extent."

"Telepathically?"

Moffamides frowned. "We are not truly adept."

"Hmm. In Olanje an important society intends to stop the enslavement of erjins. What do you think of this?"

"Foolishness. The erjins are otherwise wasted and we are supplied good wheels and bearings and metal parts for our sail-wagons. The commerce is profitable."

"Don't you consider the commerce immoral?"

Moffamides looked at Elvo in what seemed mild perplexity. "It is work approved by Ahariszeio."

"I would like to visit the laboratories, or camps, whatever they are called. Could such a visit be arranged?"

Moffamides gave a curt laugh. "Impossible. Here are your friends."

Jemasze and Kurgech returned to the land-yawl. Moffamides gave them a sedate greeting. "Your craft is eager and yearns for the sarai. A fair wind offers; it is time you were away."

"All very well," said Jemasze, "but how do we find Poliamides?"

"You would do best to forget Poliamides. He is far away. Like all Outkers you brood too much upon the evanescent."

"I concede the fault; where is Poliamides?"

Moffamides made an easy gesture. "I cannot say; I do not know."

Kurgech leaned forward to stare into the priest's pale buff eyes. Moffamides' face went lax. Kurgech said softly: "You are lying."

Moffamides became angry. "Practice none of your Blue magic here on the Palga! We are not without defenses!" He recovered his poise almost instantly. "I only try to protect you. The omens are bad. Uther Madduc came to grief, and now you go forth to repeat his mistake. Is it any wonder that I perceive false winds?"

"Uther Madduc was killed by a Blue," said Gerd Jemasze. "So far as I know, there was no connection between his death and his trip across the Palga."

Moffamides smiled. "Perhaps you are wrong."

"Perhaps. Do you intend to help us or hinder us?"

"I help you best by urging your return to the Alouan."

"What danger would we encounter? The Palga is famous for its tranquility."

"Never thwart the Srenki," said Moffamides. "They work their tragic deeds and so protect us

all."

Enlightenment came to Elvo; the terrible man of the night before had been one of this ilk; was Moffamides now conveying an oblique warning or reproach?

"They bear their unhappy lot with pain," intoned Moffamides. "If one is mishandled, the others exact an exaggerated retribution."

"This is nothing to us," said Jemasze. "Inform us as to Poliamides and we will be on our way."

Elvo Glissam frowned off into the sky. Moffamides said: "Fare northeast on a broad reach. Turn into the third track which you will discover on the third day. Follow the track four days to the Aluban, which is a great forest, and at the white pillar ask for Poliamides."

"Very good. You have prepared our fiaps?"

Moffamides stood silent a moment; then he turned and walked away. Five minutes later he returned with a wicker box. "Here are potent fiaps. The green-yellow guards your land-yawl. The orange-black-whites provide for your personal protection. I wish you the joy of whatever fair winds Ahariszeio sees fit to send you."

Moffamides stalked from the yard.

Elvo, Kurgech and Gerd Jemasze climbed aboard the land-yawl; Jemasze activated the auxiliary motor and the yawl rolled out upon the sarai. From the

south blew the monsoon breeze. Elvo took the wheel while Kurgech and Jemasze hoisted jib, mainsail and mizzen; off across the resilient soum* rolled the land-yawl. Elvo leaned back in the seat, looked up at the sky, surveyed the landscape, where the only contrast came from moving cloud-shadows, and glanced astern at the diminishing No. 2 Depot. Freedom! Out upon the windy sarai with only space around him! Oh for the life of a Wind-runner!

Jemasze trimmed the sails; the land-yawl jerked forward and gained a speed which Elvo estimated to be quite thirty miles an hour.

The yawl needed little attention at the helm; Elvo used a claw-shaped device to engage the wheel and rose to his feet to revel in the motion. Kurgech and Gerd Jemasze were similarly affected. Kurgech stood by the main-mast, the wind ruffling his sparse amber curls; Jemasze stretched out in the cockpit and broached one of the casks of beer with which he had provisioned the yawl. "No question but what there are worse ways to live," he said.

METHUEN ROSE up the sky. No. 2 Depot had disappeared astern. The sarai looked as before: a dun flat-land, relieved here and there by wisps of crisp yellow straw and an occasional low flat flower. Cloud shadows coursed across the

*Soum: the thick tough dun lichen which carpets most of the Palga.

soum; the air was fresh, neither cool nor warm, and smelled faintly of straw and a more subtle fragrance from the lichen. There was nothing to be seen, yet Elvo found the landscape anything but monotonous; it changed constantly in a manner he could not easily define: perhaps through clouds and shadows. The wheels, whispering with speed, left a dark track across the soum; occasionally other traces indicated that at some time in the past other sail-wagons had come this way.

Elvo noticed Kurgech and Jemasze talking together and staring astern. Elvo rose to his feet and scanned the southern horizon. He saw nothing and resumed his seat. Since neither Kurgech nor Jemasze saw fit to enlighten him, he asked no questions.

Halfway through the afternoon a group of small humps marked the horizon, which as they approached proved to be sizeable hillocks flanked by fields of growing stuff: grain, melons, fruit trees, bread-and-butter plant, pepper plants, elixir vines. The plots were each about an acre in extent; each was watered by a system of tubes radiating from a pond, and each was guarded by a conspicuous flap.

The time was now late afternoon, and with the pond affording a pleasant place to bathe, Jemasze elected to camp. Elvo looked at the fruit trees, but Jemasze indicated the flaps. "Beware!"

"The fruit is ripe! In fact some

is rotting, going to waste!"

"I advise you to leave it alone."

"Hmmf. What would happen if I ate, say, one of those tangerines?"

"I only know that your madness or death would inconvenience us all, so please control your appetite."

"Certainly," said Elvo stiffly. "By all means."

The three lowered sails, blocked the wheels, bathed in the pond, prepared a meal over a small camp-fire, then sat back over cups of tea and watched another magnificent sunset.

Twilight became night; the sky shone with stars beyond number. The constellation Gyrgus looped across the zenith; to the southwest shone the Pentadex; in the east rose the blazing miracle which was Alastor Cluster. The men put down pads loose-packed with aerospore on the deck of the yawl and lay down to sleep.

At midnight Elvo half-awoke and lay drowsily musing over the episode of the night before. Reality? Hallucination? . . . Out on the Palga sounded a soft eery whistle, followed a few minutes later by another such whistle from a different direction. Elvo quietly rose to his feet and went to stand by the mast. A man loomed above him in the starlight. Elvo's heart jumped up in his throat; he gave a croak of dismay. The man turned and made a gesture of annoyance; Elvo recognized Kurgech. He whispered: "Did

you hear the whistles?"

"Insects."

"Then why are you standing here?"

"The insects whistle when they are disturbed—perhaps by a night-hawk or a walker."

From a distance of no more than ten yards sounded a clear fluting warble. "Gerd Jemasze is down there," muttered Kurgech. "He watched against the skyline."

"For what?"

"For whatever has been following us."

The two stood quiet in the starlight. Half an hour passed. The yawl quivered; Gerd Jemasze spoke in a soft voice. "Nothing."

"I felt nothing," said Kurgech.

"I should have brought a set of sensors," grumbled Jemasze. "Then we could sleep in peace."

"The bugle-bugs serve us as well."

Elvo said: "I thought the Wind-runners molested no one."

"The Srenki molest as they see fit."

Jemasze and Kurgech returned to their pads; Elvo Glissam presently followed.

Dawn flooded the east with pink-crimson light. Clouds burned red, and the sun appeared. No breath of air fluttered the silk whisks on the yawl's shrouds, and the three made no haste over breakfast.

With the wagon becalmed Elvo climbed to the summit of a nearby hill and descended the opposite side, where he discov-

ered a copse of wild papaws, apparently unguarded by fiap. The fruit appeared ripe and succulent: round red globes with orange stars at the ends, surrounded by black voluted foliage. Elvo nonetheless eyed the fruit askance and passed it by.

Returning around the base of the hill he met Kurgech with a sack of crayfish he had taken from an irrigation ditch. Elvo mentioned the pawpaws and Kurgech agreed that a good lunch could be made of boiled crayfish and fruit; the two returned to the copse. Kurgech searched for fiaps and found none; the two men picked as much fruit as they could carry, and returned around the hill.

Arriving at the land-yawl, they found it looted of all portable gear, equipment and provisions. Gerd Jemasze, coming from a morning plunge in the pond, joined them a moment after they discovered the loss.

Kurgech uttered a set of sibilant Uldra curses directed at Mof-famides. "His fiaps were as weak as water; he sent us forth naked."

Gerd Jemasze gave his characteristic curt nod. "Nothing unexpected, of course. What do you see for tracks?"

Kurgech examined the soum. His nose twitched; he leaned closer to the ground and sighted along the surface. "A single man came and went." He moved off twenty yards. "Here he climbed on his vehicle and departed yonder." Kurgech pointed west,

around the base of the hills.

Jemasze considered. "There's still only a trace of wind. He can't move at any speed—if he's in a sail-wagon." He squinted along the trail of the vehicle, a pair of dark marks on the soulm. "The trail curves; he's sailing around the hill. You follow the track; I'll cut across the hill; we'll catch him on the other side. Elvo, you stay and guard the yawl before someone steals the whole affair."

The two men set off, Kurgech trotting after the tracks; Jemasze scrambling up the hillside.

Kurgech came in sight of the thief-wagon first: a small tall-masted skimmer with three spindly wheels and slatting sails, moving no faster than a walk. At the sight of Kurgech the occupant trimmed his sail, scanned the sky and looked around the circle of the horizon, but saw nothing except Gerd Jemasze approaching from the direction in which he was headed.

Jemasze reached the craft first and held up his hand. "Stop."

The occupant, a middle-aged man of no great stature, turned pale buff eyes up and down Jemasze's frame, luffed his sail and applied the brake. "Why do you hinder my passage?"

"Because you have stolen our belongings. Turn around."

The Wind-runner's face became mulish. "I took only what was available."

"Did you not see our fiaps?"

"The fiap is dead; it spent its

magic last year. You have no right to transfer fiaps; such an act is the paltry play of children."

"Last year's fiaps, eh?" mused Jemasze. "How do you know?"

"Isn't it evident? Do you not see the pink strand on the orange? Stand aside; I am not a man for idle conversation."

"Nor are we," said Jemasze. "Turn your craft and sail back to our yawl."

"By no means. I do as I please and you cannot protest; my fiap is fresh and strong."

Jemasze approached the hull of the skimmer. He pointed to the hillside. "See those stones yonder? What if we pile them in front of you and astern? Will your fiap carry you over two piles of rocks?"

"I will sail on before you pile the rocks."

"Then you will sail over my body."

"What of that? Your personal fiap is a joke. Who do you think to befuddle? The fiap was hung on a beer vat to guard the malt from going sour."

Jemasze laughed and pulling the fiap from his head threw it to the ground. "Kurgech, bring stones. We'll wall in this thief so that he'll never depart."

The Wind-runner gave a passionate cry of outrage. "You are morphotes in disguise! Must I always lose my gains to plunderers? Is justice gone from the Palga?"

"We will talk philosophy after we regain our belongings."

(cont. on page 74)

REQUIEM FOR APOLLO

The Apollo space program was the most ambitious ever undertaken by mankind, and it put a succession of men upon the surface of the moon. Ultimately, a victim of changing political climates, the program was allowed to die a lingering death. In the two pieces which follow, two views are expressed, two impressions given. Each was offered independently; each complements the other. Sandra Miesel is an Indianapolis housewife, academic, and sf fan (she has been nominated for the Best Fan Writer Hugo award this year): hers is close-focus, a final evocation and memory of Apollo's last flight. Jack C. Haldeman II is a science fiction writer (whose "Watchdog" in our May, 1972, issue was later included in Lester del Rey's anthology of the best sf stories of the year) and long-time fan (with his wife Alice he co-chairs this year's World Science Fiction Convention): his is the long view, the summary of what we have accomplished thus far in space and what we hope to accomplish yet. Both Miesel and Haldeman bring sf-oriented sensibilities to bear upon a program and an event which realized the fondest dreams of science fiction: Man to the moon.

LIKE THE SUN IN SPLENDOR SANDRA MIESEL

SKIES ARE BROAD and low over coastal Florida. Cloud strata press down from above, squeezing one out towards impossibly distant horizons. Driving to Kennedy Space Center we pass tidy orange groves, empty meadows, spiky palmetto thickets. Water and wildlife abound. Herons, egrets, gulls, pelicans, ducks, and vultures ignore thickening traffic. Alligators and wild pigs stay hidden. A single armadillo scuttles into view and is gone.

Finally, beyond the last draw-

bridge, the launch site unfolds. Is this what we came out in the wilderness to see? A toy rocket? Not a toy rocket? Not an illusion molded out of soft afternoon light?

Another twenty miles' travel brings Apollo 17 into clear focus. At least our eyes focus. Our minds cannot, quite yet. We park and seek a vantage point. The press site curves around the tip of a canal about three miles from Launch Complex 39. Camera tripods have already sprouted along the weedy, burr-infested

shoreline. Inland, a covered grandstand is beginning to fill up with reporters, many of them non-professional journalists like us. The seats are fronted by television monitors and an electric scoreboard clock. They are flanked by restrooms, a canteen trailer, and a row of structures resembling portable classrooms which serve as broadcast studios. (CBS and NBC each rate two storeys, the rest only one.) A few people are gawking at Walter Cronkite through the window of the CBS building and snapping his picture. The casually dressed crowd drifts through the hours before liftoff in good humor.

Eventually the sun goes down. It is an undistinguished sunset and attracts no notice. We cannot get our fill of looking eastward over the water: thousands of eye-beams twisted together, thousands of eyes threaded upon one string. Apollo 17 stands snared in webs of light. Two banks of intense spotlights interlace around her and fan upward to the clouds. The rocket sparkles like fine porcelain in their glare. A plume of glowing white vapor streams about her waist and her gantry lights twinkle like captured stars. The whole luminous—numinous?—spectacle is mirrored on the canal. Fish leap up from the still water. Birds wheel by. Steady flickers and sporadic flashes of lightning set huge thunderheads aglow in the east.

The clouds have drawn back like stage curtains. We scatter down to the beach for the last minutes of countdown. Apollo 17 is poised to sever her bonds of light. "Minus thirty seconds and...hold."

We filter back, still confident. News copy is rewritten, snacks scavenged, impressions reviewed.

Consider the VAB. Consider the largest inclosed structure made by man. From the outside the Vehicle Assembly Building is merely large. Our minds recoil from comprehending its real size. Inside, reality engulfs us with majestic vistas, colossal piers, doors and windows scaled for titans. Girders, scaffolds, rigging, catwalks, stairs, meld in a riot of perspective, an orgy of geometry, engendering patterns everywhere. We peer up from the floor. We gaze down from an eyrie. We notice ordinary human sounds devoured by unechoing vastness. It is astonishingly like the monstrous vaults and galleries Piranesi drew two centuries ago. But his imaginary prisons evoke awe deliberately. Here awe is an incidental by-product of function.

That function is incubating rockets. We stare at components of the youngest hatchling, Skylab. In the coming months cyclopean sliding doors will raise and the crawler will bear away this last member of the breed Saturn V.

Consider the crawler. If there ever was a car fit for Juggernaut, this is it: 6,000,000 pounds un-

loaded weight, area larger than a baseball diamond. Eight caterpillar tracks carry it at a maximum of two miles per hour over a dual-laned gravel path as wide as a divided expressway. Yet its 400 tons of tread leave only the faintest imprints on the road surface. Today an egret follows in Behemoth's shadow and pecks at the grass median strip. With modest exertion the bird might have overtaken the vehicle. Control rooms at both ends allow it to run in either direction, rather like Dr. Doolittle's pushmi-pullyu. The transporter never turns in its journeys from VAB to pad.

Lastly, consider the pad. Long, gentle ramps join the crawlerway to its Apollo-crowned summit. Who could build an ugly rocketship? Who could paint the fullness of her beauty? Perhaps Turner, the master of luminosity, could have managed it, few others. We circle Launch Pad A. As we depart, a low-hanging cloud comes to rest on the top of the gantry.

"REJOICE!" proclaims a babel of electronic voices, "The delay is now past. The problem is over and gone. The count is resumed." We cheer for the clock and scramble back to our places.

Does a rocket lift by propellants alone, we wonder, or do the prayers and desires of the watchers help bear her up? More than weary sentinels, we long for dawn in that midnight darkness. And

suddenly. . . she comes forth as the morning rising, moon-fair, sun-bright, terrible as an army in battle array. From end to end the sky blooms golden pink, brilliant as true sunrise but subtly different in tint, like sunshine during an eclipse. She hovers. She ascends in earth-shaking thunder and glory-white flame. The very firmament is being ripped asunder from bottom to top by the fury of her passing. A few cries and exclamations. No applause. No cheers.

By now she is miles aloft. Her exhaust trail blazes crimson. The false dawn fades back into darkness. A short-lived blue halo signals the second burn. Her first stage falls away. She is lost to our sight. The searchlight beams resume their vigil around the empty, vapor-shrouded pad.

"Apollo17—not an end but a beginning" read NASA's slogan. It had seemed pathetic before the launch. Now peaceful exaltation transmutes it. *In my end is my beginning; in my beginning is my end. But all shall be well, all manner of things shall be well.* . . . Post-launch euphoria is a limpid serenity like the contentment that follows childbirth. Light has begotten light. Some gleam of Saturn fire persists like candleglow through all the eight hundred miles home.

—SANDRA MIESEL

SPACE THROUGH OUR FINGERS

JACK C. HALDEMAN II

THEY HAD STARS in their eyes. The glory of space exploration caught their imagination and they did something about it. When the money was cut back and things looked dark for more explorations, they rose as a unit and protested. Their voices were heard.

Star Trek was safe for another season.

At the same time, out in the real world, the number of Apollo missions were being cut back. America had given mankind its first real step to the stars. Now it was preparing to take two steps backwards.

And where were the voices?

Are our priorities so misdirected that we take the cancellation of a television show as a personal affront, and yet we will sit back and nod vacantly as the real thing erodes before our eyes?

Step back away from the television set and all the re-runs of Captain Kirk—he'll be on video tape for years. Watch what's happening out in the real world. Space is being phased out. Apollo is a dust-mote dream, the end of an era. Spock still goes through the same motions five nights a week on channel 11.

IT REALLY *was* like all the tired old science fiction clichés. The darkness rolled back as an incredibly bright pinpoint of light burst from the bottom of the rocket and blossomed into billowing clouds of smoke and fire and steam. It was impossible that the massive rocket could be moved at all and yet there it was—ever so slowly—straining, lifting. A few seconds later the sound hit. It was something you felt as much as heard. Ten million pounds of thrust being generated over three miles away shook the ground. Three men with a bomb tied to their tails were headed to the moon. At 12:33 am on December 7th, 1972 the final chapters were being written. Perhaps the last men this century to set foot on a soil other than Earth's were on their way. The book was closing.

People were shouting, cheering, yelling—trying vainly to raise their voices against the overwhelming noise. The shouts were a litany—a chorus of voices sending the new adventurers on their way, not unlike the priests blessing the fishing boats of another bygone era.

As the rocket dwindled to a

flaming star, a girl standing next to me turned with tears in her eyes.

"Nobody ever told me it was *beautiful*," she said to no one in particular.

And it *was* beautiful—on several levels of interpretation.

It was a spectacle, a circus of sorts. There's no doubt about that. It was the most complicated single effort in the history of man. And what a show! Television coverage was a pale reflection of the actual launch. Even the most modern sound equipment isn't able to handle the noise when that rocket takes off. A three inch speaker in a television set can't come close to reproducing the physical and emotional effects of being totally surrounded by the buffeting, crackling sound that pounds on your chest and rattles the coins in your pockets.

To some it was a shrine, a temple. People traveled from all over the world to stand at the foot of the last of the moon rockets. There was something almost holy about what was happening; as if man had transcended man in attempting something on so vast a scale.

Over a million people came to watch the launch. They came in cars and campers, trains, chartered planes and boats. Many came by motorcycles, bicycles or hitch-hiked. A new city started growing at the Cape as tents sprung up a couple days before the launch. Long-haired young

people crowded pup tent to Winnebago up against older families. The nearby roads and rivers were jammed as everybody tried to get the best view. The last view.

Just to be there. To watch it go—to be a part of it all.

Even the press, noted for its blasé attitude, was caught up in all the excitement. Camera bags and coats were covered with emblems from the launches they had covered.

A press badge in my drawer is a footnote to the memory.

Superimposed over Apollo 17 was an overlay of sadness—a sense of loss. This was the last one. Sure, men would still go to space; Skylab was coming up and the Shuttle would follow. But how long would it be before man would ever go out again? It seemed to be in a hopelessly distant future.

Old and outmoded launch sites were being dismantled and sold for scrap metal. A shiny monument for the original seven astronauts now stands surrounded by tall weeds. The constantly pounding ocean in the background is a reminder to the transience of man's activities.

But still a sense of history remains. Things *happened* here and you can't carry away their effect on the future course of mankind and sell it for scrap.

Launch complex 26 is one of those places. It was here that the first U.S. satellite was launched in January of 1958. Explorer 1

opened our door and man crawled through to the moon.

A space museum now sits at Launch complex 26 and the gantry for the Jupiter C that lifted Explorer 1 seems like a toy compared to the others up the Cape. The small concrete bunker that served as launch control for the flight shows how small we started and how far we've come.

Those were the days when the launch director would look through a window in the bunker and decide from the color of the flame how well ignition was progressing and whether or not they would have to abort. The old days.

The days of dreams.

For me the dreams began with a childhood filled with such folk-heros as del Rey, Asimov and Heinlein. Space travel was an everyday occurrence that sprang magically from the pages of books and magazines. Sense of wonder isn't a tired phrase when you're ten years old.

And then the dream merged with reality as the papers told of a mythical place called White Sands where stranger rockets with stranger names like Wac Corporal were setting altitude records.

Then one day everything changed as the Earth gained a baby moon. Thousands stood in the night to look up with awe in hopes of seeing the Russian Sputnik. It was exciting and I couldn't help feeling that *we* had done it. We, the human race, not nations,

not individuals, had taken the first step.

But those were cold war times and the satellite gap became as much of a catchword as the education gap. Naturally, it had to be a race with the Russians.

The papers were filled with box scores. We did this, but the Russians did this and this and this. They were ahead, but we were gaining fast. Even through the roar of wounded national pride it was exciting to see that things *were* happening, satellites were going up, dreams were being pieced together on drafting boards. Satellite observation times were printed on the front pages of newspapers, right next to the weather forecasts.

In April of 1961 Yuri Gagarin became the first man to orbit the Earth. He was followed, a month later, by the first American into space, Alan Shepard, who made a sub-orbital flight in a Mercury capsule.

Such was the nearly primitive state of the art when a young president committed the United States to a manned lunar landing before the decade was out; a difficult and costly dream.

Mercury developed into Gemini into Apollo and who can forget that Christmas Eve when Apollo 8 circled the moon and man first traveled across space to another body? How lonely they seemed.

July 20, 1969 at 10:56 pm; the dream was fulfilled. A world

momentarily united held its breath as man took the small step and the giant leap that lifted him forever from the earth. As he had once climbed down out of the trees, he had now, in an equally significant step, freed himself from the globe that gave him birth.

Ghost-like images danced on millions of television sets and in the flickering greyness it was hard to believe that they were really there—that *we* were there. In the bleak lunar landscape the cool, computer-efficient astronauts seemed to become more human. At the same time they were more than human; they were making the trip symbolically for all mankind—for Kennedy, Goddard, Willy Ley and all the others who laid the foundations for the dream. They went for all of us, the billions of Earth-bound people—to expand our world, to give us hope and heroes during an otherwise dark period of our history.

But mostly they went for those like my daughter. Born three months later, she belongs to the future, a world significantly changed by what they did that day. She plays with toy rockets and plastic astronauts as casually as she does with her dolls; they're all a normal part of her world. A generation that accepts spaceflight as naturally as airplanes is already nearly grown. This is the future that spaceflight is all about.

And how will the future look

back on us?

We view with some humor the story that Columbus discovered America while looking for a cheaper way to get spices. Five hundred years from now the "space race" and all the attendant squabbles may seem just as humorous.

When Columbus stood on the New World's shore the thought of a modern technological America was beyond his wildest dreams. As we stand on the threshold of space exploration the doors that lie ahead in the next five hundred years are even more unpredictable.

The future holds the justification of the space program, much more than the present. The trouble is that most people suffer from acute near-sightedness; next weekend is a long time away, a decade is unimaginable, a century is science fiction.

People are used to seeing things in terms of the here-and-now, and this stands in the way of their understanding of the total picture of the space program. Poul Anderson said, "There are cheaper ways to produce a Teflon frying pan." And this is part of the problem.

People cannot reasonably expect to see all the benefits of the program the day after a mission, yet they do. This partially came about in the way people were "sold" on the space program.

It is true that the immediate benefits of the program are many

and varied, but these are only the tip of the iceberg; most of the advances are invisible to the general public. Some too, like satellite television transmission, are already taken for granted.

I work in a trauma unit in a large East coast hospital and all of our patients are critical patients, mostly automobile accident victims flown in by helicopter. Much of the equipment we use in the unit is a direct spin-off from the space program; some of it directly from NASA. Patients are automatically monitored for blood pressure, respiration rates, temperature, pulse rates and other parameters. Alarm systems sound if values exceed or fall below set ranges. The wafer-thin, paste-on electrodes we use were developed by the biomedical space team, as well as sensors small enough to fit in a vein and not impede blood flow. Fluid flows are watched and regulated by remote, automatic devices. Because you can't send a doctor up with each astronaut they needed precision remote equipment. So they developed it. Many people are alive because of that.

If I hear one more doctor say we should cut out space funding to put money into medical research I think I'll throw up. The cutback in space funds has *already* eliminated money available for medical research in these areas.

But saving lives is only one sideline of space-derived technology. It is better to prevent the in-

juries in the first place. Much NASA work has been done in that direction.

While looking for ways to prevent hydroplaning or skidding on wet airport runways, NASA developed a technique of grooving the surfaces to prevent the formation of the dangerous water film. This has proven to be so successful in preventing skids that it is in use at many major airports and is now being incorporated into highway construction.

A technique developed in the manned space program to dissipate shock energy into heat has found its way into highway crash barriers. Now under testing, these barriers are said to absorb the impact of an automobile traveling 60 miles per hour.

Fire safety has been a prime NASA concern, in the saving of both lives and property. One area that shows great promise is the study of paints that release a flame-retarding gas when heat is applied. Foams that have good insulating qualities and are also fire-retardant have been developed at NASA's Ames Research Center. Both of these materials may soon find their way into home construction.

Automobile tires have been made safer by a device that NASA developed to test miniaturized circuits. This is an infrared optical camera capable of reading the heat on a spinning tire from 600,000 points every second, revealing flaws and hot areas. This

equipment is already in daily use by U.S. tire manufacturers.

Much safety research came about because of the necessity to use lightweight, high strength material in the space program. To be effective, these materials had to be free of flaws, and before the space age the tools for testing these materials just didn't exist. The tools and techniques developed in this area are now in widespread use throughout industry.

In the early days of the space program weight was one of the most critical problems we had to overcome. Unlike the Russians, we didn't have rockets capable of lifting heavy payloads. This led to a large amount of research and development into miniaturization and integrated circuits. Knowledge gained in this way shows up in our daily lives in everything from transistor radios to microwave ovens.

Paralleling this development was the rapid expansion of computer technology. The on-board computer used in the Apollo 17 flight was more sophisticated than the entire land-based system used in Alan Shepard's first flight.

The communication field has also greatly expanded during the era of space exploration and research. International calls routinely travel by communications satellite. There are three times as many trans-oceanic satellite circuits as there are cable circuits. The cost of calls has gone down

with satellite usage, too.

Nations with wide-spread populations will soon be using satellites for education. It is more economical to equip small, isolated villages with battery-powered television sets than to attempt to spread a small teaching staff around. Educational programs will be beamed down directly from satellites rather than having to go through a costly relay network. The cost of this satellite system is roughly one half that of a similar ground based system. India is the first nation to make widespread use of this with a system serving over 5000 widely separated villages.

Obviously, the future utilization of similar satellite systems will not be restricted to underdeveloped countries; projected effects in the United States are wild and far-reaching, perhaps, even, not too far in the future. Companies are already competing with one another to put up similar direct television satellites over the U.S. Such satellites could carry a large number of simultaneous transmissions of television programs as well as other forms of data transmission and communications.

Weather satellites are another part of our daily life where space technology is taken for granted. But the information a trained meteorologist can get from these transmissions is amazing. Sending back both visible-light photographs and infrared, they have done much to improve the accu-

racY of weather forecasting. It has been estimated that without early and accurate satellite warning about the recent hurricane Camile, some 50,000 people might have died.

Authorities say that an accurate five-day forecast would save the United States over six *billion dollars* a year applied to such diverse activities as agriculture, transportation and tourism. This is twice what the U.S. spent on space this year.

It is important not to lose sight of the fact that while we are in space much of our work is directed towards Earth's problems. Many ecological studies and observations are included in the recent Earth Resources Technology Satellites (ERTS). With over 23 countries participating in the project (and helping to foot the bill) our air-ocean-land system is being studied as never before.

Essentially highly modified weather satellites, they are placed into orbit in such a way as to pass over the same point of Earth every 18 days, at the same time of day. Carrying specialized cameras capable of viewing in a variety of wavelengths they cover a 115 mile wide area as they circle the Earth in a polar orbit 14 times a day.

Basic data to be obtained relates to crop species and health, geologic structures, rock and oil types, coastal processes, surface water distribution and water pollution. Collecting data from remote, unattended ground-based

sensors, the satellites study the water level in selected lakes, streams and reservoirs; soil moisture content, snow depth, surface temperature, ocean salinity and pollution, ice pressure, ocean currents and atmospheric pollution.

A look at some of the specific ERTS programs is a good cross section of Earth study from space: snow surveys assessing the risks of spring flooding in Norway. Study of land use in the Boston-Richmond megalopolis. Inventory of timber resources in selected United States forests. Study of ecological changes taking place on the East Coast of the U.S. Land use and soil erosion in Guatemala. Study of vegetation damage from specific highway construction in Maine. And this is just a partial list of some of the early objectives.

ERTS-1 was launched in 1972 and the results have exceeded all expectations. One major discovery was an area of water pollution drifting off the Atlantic Coast rather than dissipating as expected. An unexpected geological feature found near Reno, Nevada, may be a meteor crater over 25 miles across. New areas of water bearing rocks have been charted in various parts of the United States.

When people tell me that we should drop the space program and concentrate on Earth's problems, I tell them about the ERTS project; studying Earth from the best possible position—space. To

lose this project would be to lose what may be one of the most important tools we have in the fight against the evils man has perpetrated against his environment.

There are those who mistrust technology in any form; I have even met people whose professions depended on a high level of technology, yet who would strike out blindly at "evil" scientists and engineers. Some would have us return to an agrarian way of life, if permitted. Science fiction readers have long known that the problem lies not with the technology, but with its misuse. We have gone awfully far awfully fast without looking around to see what changes we have brought to our planet. Man's misuses of technology caused many of the problems and they can only be solved by careful application of that same technology or the development of new ones. Hiding our heads in the sand won't help a bit.

And the space program is one of the best tools we have to solve the problems on Earth.

A large portion of the Skylab mission is devoted to Earth-related scientific investigation. Among the areas studied are agriculture, forestry, geology, geography, air and water pollution, land use and meteorology. Skylab's crews use highly sophisticated equipment to observe analytically the influence man has had and is still having on his environment.

With 13,000 cubic feet of work-

space, Skylab is the largest volume spacecraft ever put into orbit. And a spacecraft it is, too. With more than just a touch of that "crazy Buck Rogers stuff," solar arrays supply electrical power for the entire Skylab. The meteor shield that gave the mission so much trouble was an aluminum sheet only 0.025 inches thick. Quite a change from the heavy steel bulkheads of the pulp-era.

The trouble with the shield and certain other components throughout the mission brings out another important point. It took men to fix the problems: men *out there*. If Skylab had been an automated orbiting lab instead of a manned one, it could not have been repaired. Work in space must necessarily be a balance of manned and unmanned systems. There are certain times when a man just has to be there, on the spot, for observation, judgment or a little ingenuity.

Skylab has three primary goals, medical, astronomical and Earth study experiments. Several years of planning went into the Skylab experiments. Investigators did a considerable amount of work in design and development in order to take the best possible advantage of the unique set of conditions provided by Skylab.

One of the most often heard complaints about the Apollo flights was that there was not enough hard science investigation built into the program. Without

trying to backtrack and point out the wealth of scientific knowledge that came out and is still coming out of the program, let's take a closer look at Skylab's projects.

One study looks at the mineral balance of the astronauts before, during and after the flight to determine the effects of the absence of gravity on these parameters. You may recall that there was a great deal of worry in this direction at the beginning of the space program, with preliminary indications of loss of calcium in the early flights. Follow-up data has been inconclusive and it is hoped that Skylab will answer some of these questions. Related to this experiment are several others studying changes in bone and muscle tissue during space flight. Another experiment studies the endocrinological effects on man resulting from long exposure to zero gravity and the readaptation to Earth's gravity.

If you have ever crouched down for a long period of time and then felt dizzy or faint when you stood up, then you have experienced an example of what is called blood pooling. What happened was that your blood had collected in the veins in the lower part of your body and when you stood up there was insufficient blood flow to your brain, causing dizziness. This is directly gravity-related and can be studied in space by the *controlled* application of various amounts of pressure. This experiment would not

be possible on Earth.

The effects of gravity on the heart are something we never think about, yet in my work at the hospital I see it every day. Certain patients, such as those suffering from extreme burns, cannot be turned in their beds, yet if they remain in one position complications will develop. They are usually placed in a special bed, called a Strickere Frame, that resembles a large wheel. The patients are turned over by rotation. The problem is that the sudden change in the position of large amounts of blood causes severe heart strains on these patients; patients who are already in poor physical condition due to their injuries. Cardiac arrests during these times are not uncommon. Space research may give us some clues as to the role gravity plays in all this, even to the basic position of the heart, which is also gravity-related.

The frequency of chromosomal aberration will be investigated by pre and post-flight studies. Earlier work showed slight increases that could not be correlated with mission duration, EVA or any other flight parameter. Skylab is an excellent opportunity to study this in more detail.

Another experiment will study man's ability to combat infection and repair injured tissues by examining the changes that take place in man's body chemistry as a result of prolonged exposure to zero gravity. Studies will also be

made on blood volume, cell population and cell life. Basic information will be obtained on the glucose transfer process (about which much is unknown), the structure of the cell membrane, the metabolic process within the cell and the dependence of these on gravity.

Special equipment will study the effects of zero gravity on man's sensitivity and susceptibility to motion and rotation along with his perception of orientation. His effectiveness in doing work in zero gravity will also be examined.

When you look at the medical experiments carried out on Skylab, it is important to see that really *basic* investigations are being done. The information received from Skylab is not limited to applications in space; techniques, developments and discoveries in space can and already do benefit us all.

Skylab's six telescopes provide astronomers with their first real chance to do detailed astronomical observations above the disrupting influences of Earth's atmosphere. Initially, the emphasis will be on solar observations. The telescopes, each with its own special function and characteristics, are co-ordinated with monitoring equipment in order to study the sun as has never before been possible.

Celestial observations will also center around an interesting phenomenon called the Gegenschein Light. This is a faint,

nebulous light source opposite the sun and in the plane of Earth's orbit. Speculation on its origin has ranged from the scientifically conservative viewpoint that holds the Gegenschein Light to be a collection of charged particles, space dust; to the science fictional cliché of a twin planet. Studies of this phenomenon were made during the Apollo flights, but results were inconclusive. The more sophisticated equipment aboard Skylab may unravel the puzzle.

When I was an introverted high school student with my nose buried in SF paperbacks and my imagination traveling the stars, I would have leaped at the chance to somehow tie my life in with the real space effort. Nineteen lucky high school students have just that chance in Skylab. Selected from over 3,400 proposals, the student's experiments will be incorporated into Skylab's protocol. Quasars, wave motion and spider webs are among the subjects the astronauts will study according to the experimental designs supplied by the students.

But where do we go from Skylab? To a large degree this depends on the mood of the public and its elected officials. Officially, the next major step is the Apollo/Soyuz linkup. Although interesting from an international cooperation viewpoint, the mission really proves very little except that if the appropriate rockets are ready at the right time, the Russians can rescue us and we

can rescue them. In a slightly larger view, it shows the openness of the U.S. space program. But by and large, it is a dead end; something to keep the space team together while waiting for the next step.

The really important upcoming event in our plans for space is the development and application of the Space Shuttle. If properly funded and carried through to completion, it could be one of the most far-reaching steps man has taken in space. It *could* be, but there could also be problems. Allow me to introduce a note of pessimism.

The Apollo program was originally scheduled for three additional lunar landings, but these were eliminated when congress elected not to fund them. Skylab was originally supposed to be two separate space stations, one following the other. This was cut back to one. I have seen launch pads sold for scrap metal, rockets dismantled for parts. Until recently, there was another Saturn v rocket in mothballs, also another basic Skylab module. Congress did not see fit to fund these projects to completion; they died, stagnant and broken—forgotten relics. There were rumors that an international body would get together, pick up the pieces and launch a truly international Skylab, but even this pipe dream is gone. The last Saturn v rocket is gone. Another dream is gone.

So it's time to wake up another

one.

And this dream could be one of making space operations cheap enough that even Congress can't complain.

Ten years ago it cost roughly \$1 million a pound to put a payload into orbit. Today it costs about \$1000 a pound. The Shuttle could bring the cost down to \$100 a pound.

The advantage the Shuttle has is that its major components are reusable. The solid propellant booster that lifts the Shuttle into orbit will fall back to Earth, braked by parachutes. The booster will be recovered, reworked and reflown up to twenty times.

The delta-winged shuttle itself will land like an airplane and is designed to be reused up to 100 times.

One prime use of the Shuttle will be to place satellites into orbit, eliminating the expensive, one-use booster rockets we now use. It will also be possible to rendezvous with already orbiting satellites in order to repair them or modernize and bring up-to-date their components. In the event that on-the-spot repairs are not possible, the satellite can be brought back down in the Shuttle, repaired on Earth and re-inserted into orbit by the Shuttle. This aspect alone could save millions of dollars.

The cargo area of the Shuttle measures 60' in length with a diameter of 15', allowing much larger volume payloads than is possible today. This also enables

the Shuttle to carry the materials necessary to perform a variety of tasks on each mission, providing maximum flexibility.

Maximum G forces during launch and reentry will not exceed a mild 3G, so any reasonably healthy person should be able to travel in the Shuttle. The cargo bay will be pressurized, providing a 'shirt-sleeve' environment.

The cargo bay could be set up as zero G laboratories or medical facilities. Special manufacturing techniques could be done there. The possibilities are endless, comparable to a short-term space station.

But it takes money to develop the Shuttle. Not a lot, but enough. This is where the old hue and cry comes in. So let's roll up our shirtsleeves and look at the facts: where the money comes from and where it goes.

Where it comes from is easy; taxes every year. But look at where it goes.

In 1971, during the peak of the Apollo project, the federal budget showed 3.4 billion for space against 77.2 billion for social actions. In 1973, only two areas of federal spending went down; defense went down to 76.4 billion, while space was cut 25%. In the estimated 1974 budget, defense is up to 81.1 billion while space is 3.1 billion. Social action programs now claim over 53% of the tax dollar, space about 1-1/3%. It is obviously *not* an 'either/or' situation; cutting back on the space program won't help social action

programs. At best, it would be a small drop in a large bucket. But think of what we stand to lose!

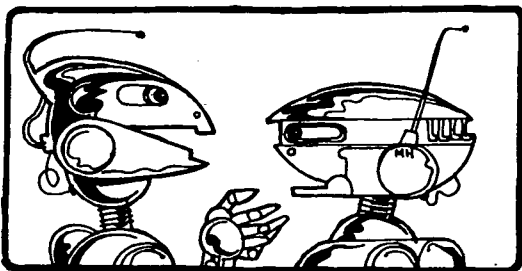
Right now, the Shuttle is adequately funded for its stage of development, but there's much more to come. The schedule calls for test flights to begin in 1976, with manned orbital test flights in 1978 and full operational facilities by 1980. The workhorse of our space program, the Shuttle is planned to take over virtually all of our launch missions by 1980, with 35-50 missions a year.

If this comes to pass, then we will truly be in an age where space activities are an everyday occurrence, helping life on our planet in innumerable ways.

But voices will be raised against it, nearsighted, narrowminded voices. We *need* space to help us grow on Earth, we can't possibly do without it. When you hear the voices that will invariably be raised, speak out against them. Write letters, know who your congressional representatives are, vote intelligently. Work within the system; it's the only thing the system understands. Western Union has a special rate that enables you to send a congressional representative a telegram for less than \$2.00. If things get tight, do it. If enough of us do it, they'll listen. If a television show is worth ten minutes writing a letter and an 8¢ stamp, what kind of a price tag can you put on the real thing?

Whatever it is, it's not high enough. —JACK C. HALDEMAN II

**SUSAN
WOOD
GLICKSOHN**
the
Clubhouse



I HAVE A PROBLEM, writing *The Clubhouse*.

I don't know who's going to read it.

Ted White, BNF and Filthy Pro, will. The faneds whose zines I review will. But a large number of readers who are only vaguely aware of sf fandom will, too; and they'll be confused by "faned" and "BNF" and all the rest of our subculture's vocabulary.

Stumbling onto fandom is a little like falling down Alice's rabbit-hole into a strange world with its own logic. Take the term "fanzine" for instance. When I discovered fandom, I thought I'd found, at last, other people who wanted to talk seriously about sf. The fledgling university club I joined began to publish a dittoed magazine containing sf stories, book reviews, science essays, and the like: obviously, a "zine" produced by and for "fans" of science fiction.

The other "fanzines" arrived in the mail. In them, a group of professional authors called each other names, several females fantasized

about the seduction of Spock, various Americans reported strange conversations in an incomprehensible jargon, an Australian described dinner with friends, and several people shared in-jokes in something called *The Fannish Worry Book*. What did all this have to do with science fiction?

Welcome to fandom. I could regularly spend a column "explaining" the phenomenon, but that would be tedious for us all, without relieving anyone's confusion. The essence of fandom is the personal reaction and contribution of each fan; my idea of "fandom" isn't necessarily yours. Fen are brought together usually, but not exclusively, by an interest in sf or fantasy to share these and common interests: music, politics (Nixon's, Trudeau's, SFWA's, whoever's) lifestyles, food, each other. If you're interested in the fan subculture, with its language and traditions, invest in:

**THE NEO-FAN'S GUIDE TO
SCIENCE FICTION FANDOM**
(Edited by Bob Tucker. Third

edition, revised by Linda Bushyager and Linda Lounsbury; available from Linda Bushyager, 1614 Evans Ave., Prospect Park, PA 19076; offset; 21 pp., 25¢. August, 1973)

An illustrated history of fandom, discussion of fan activities, and glossary, the *Guide* is clear, often irreverent, and always interesting. Here's how Tucker defines "fanzine":

"The fan magazine, an amateur journal, booklet, or newspaper, produced by the fan for his own amusement and for the amusement of others. Someone, somewhere will read even the illegible fanzine. (Also known as 'fanmag,' and sometimes abbreviated to 'finz,' or 'zine.')

"Fanzines are produced by carbon-copying, by mimeograph, hektograph, spirit duplicator (ditto machine), lithography (offset), and printing press; the means of duplication isn't as important as the legibility, but of course the more expensive methods can produce better results and increased ego-boo. . . . Most editors charge a fee for copies, simply because they can't afford to give their fanzines away when considering a circulation of 100-200 or more. Remember this before you write, asking for free sample copies—producing a fanzine can be an expensive proposition, and few, if any, fan editors ever break even. . . .

"Some fanzines last but one issue, while others have gone on

to one or two hundred editions. Warning: as a neofan, be cautious in risking large sums of money on fanzine subscriptions. Sometimes they will have folded their duper and slipped away while you were still going to the mail box. The best policy is to first make sure the fanzine is still being published, then send only enough cash to purchase one or more issues—fan editors seldom hand out rainchecks."

And, I would suggest: please *print* your name and address clearly when requesting a fanzine; please be patient, since Jophan isn't Time-Life, Inc.; and please don't send stamps or personal cheques outside the country, but buy a bank or postal money order in the appropriate currency instead.

The two most important aspects of Tucker's definition are the concept of the fanzine as something produced for your own and your friends' enjoyment; and the idea of "egoboo," defined in the *Guide* as "publicity for yourself; kind words to boost your ego." It connotes a non-monetary satisfaction, approval of your peers, and is central to fan publishing. Fanzines are a hobby, a means of communication, a way of gaining notice (or notoriety) within fandom. Therefore, unlike professional magazines, they are not published to make a profit, and may be obtained for money or "the usual"—a contribution of written material or artwork; a let-

ter of comment ("loc") discussing the previous issue's contents; or your fanzine in trade.

Sometimes a fanzine is not generally available at all.

FOOLSCAP #9 (John Berry, 35 Dusenberry Rd., Bronxville, NY 10708; irregular, mimeo; 31 pp. November, 1973)

John Berry publishes *Foolscap* for the Fantasy Amateur Press Association, a closed-membership fanpublishing association; extra copies go to friends. "To get a copy, all you have to do is ask nicely, and perhaps send some stamps or something to jog my memory come mailing-time," he writes. You also have to convince the editor you're interested in his writing—egoboo, again.

So why review it here? Well, John wrote *The Clubhouse* for several years, and I thought a discussion of his views and activities as a fan would be interesting. Besides, *Foolscap* illustrates one important type of fanzine, the personalzine, related to one important view of fandom, gathering of friends.

"*Foolscap*, at least in this instance, is something of a statement of where I am and what I am doing," John writes in his colophon, just before explaining that he doesn't really have a permanent address except his mother's house (noted above); wishing us all a happy Thanksgiving, "except in Canada where I hope you al-

ready had one," and "happy birthday, too, while I'm at it"; and insisting that the zine is still "The Trufan's Quarterly Journal of Fact and Fancy." And that's what the magazine is like: casual, chatty, with John wandering through North America, fandom, and his own mind. He refers to fandom as "an unending web of communication," and to the world science fiction convention as "our own peculiar gathering of the tribes and communal celebration within the enigmatic science fiction community. I have ambivalent feelings about that community, as every other SF fan has, but it is mine, and I've grown up with it." *Foolscap*, like a dinner in the Falls Church fan community where John's life is centred, is a way of sharing his life with fans, his friends.

The core of this issue is letters written to fannish friends throughout 1973. John tells us about Falls Church life (whole-wheat bagels, reading in the graveyard); travels to the Catskills, to St. Louis, to Bronxville; returns to set up house in Falls Church; includes an account of Torcon; and in a postscript, returns "home" to find himself evicted. That's what he does; but the letters are less about the events than John's own feelings about them. He shares scenery, for example, so that you see it and feel his reactions. Pleasure in the quiet Virginia countryside and its "big, healthy, comfortable old

trees" leads into a description of a meditation room, and to the theme of quietness, of finding a place (usually outdoors) to be alone, to discover your thoughts and values, which recurs through the fanzine. "In sitting down to write this, I'm trying to quiet myself, smooth out my mind and body, become centered," John says in one letter. Perhaps the most remarkable quality of this assemblage of letter-fragments and observations describing a life physically in transition, mentally full of questioning and confusion, is that it is "centered." My impression, finishing it, was a satisfying one of completeness.

Like a conversation with a friend, what is said in a personalzine can be less important than what is communicated to you. For example, John writes about one spring morning in Falls Church with Rich and Colleen Brown, and their young daughter Alicia:

"A grey, lazy morning, my second cup of Chinese tea, a typewriter in rich's attic. Falls Church is incredibly lush, everything green that was just budding when I left. The early magnolias and tulips are gone, but they've been replaced by far more flowers of different kinds, including lots and lots of roses. Alicia loves to bring in flowers, so there are cuttings in pots and wine bottles all over the house. Colleen loves flowers. She also gets hay fever from the pollen. So she sneezes violently every once in a while and keeps

the flowers anyway. (I'm not sure I'd do that if I had hay fever, but it's nice to have them around.) I learned something about attitudes to plants the other day, when Alicia picked a small flower (buttercup, I think, but perhaps it was a dandelion) from the front lawn. It turned out to have a second stem coming out of the first one, with an unopened flower on the end. Alicia wanted it to grow and open, even though it had been picked. Colleen said, 'Maybe if you put it in a glass of water, it will grow.' My attitude would have been (was, in fact) to be sorry that the unopened flower had been picked, and to go find another one instead. Very different. I think Colleen's is the attitude you need to make things grow: to care about each individual plant. Perhaps I'll learn that eventually.

"Why do people always pick flowers instead of letting them grow? I think it has something to do with the way we blithely change everything we touch."

There's nothing strikingly new here, except that which is most important: the freshness of John's responses, his awareness of other people and the life we share. Looking for words to describe the *Foolscap* experience, I kept coming back to "gentle" and "thoughtful." I'd say "mellow" but John himself wisely refuses to use the word because "it's acquired the status of a dope-smoker's cliché." He respects his readers' intelli-

gence and the integrity of his own thoughts, which he expresses as simply and honestly as he can.

Foolscap is a personalzine in the best sense; the editor/author uses the concept of the fanzine as a medium of communication, and the zine is unified by the pattern of his life. I reviewed it because, for me, it's one ideal of a fanzine, one I'd like to publish for my friends' enjoyment. And I reviewed it to tell you that, if you're interested in people, and in fine writing, you should somehow convince John Berry to include your name on his small mailing list.

STARLING #27 (Hank and Leigh Luttrell, 525 W. Main St., Madison, WIS 53703; quarterly, mimeo; 43 pp., 75¢, 5/\$2. January, 1974)

Starling, too, is unified by its editors' lives. Here is a genzine (general-interest fanzine), apparently the opposite of *Foolscap* in everything but the high quality of the writing. Contents, by the editors and six outside contributors, range from a serious discussion of series novels, through a commentary on the "social, economic, political, not to mention existential ickyness" of 1973, to a funny story about the murder of Mike Glicksohn, rich brown, and Arnie Katz. There's also a meaty lettercolumn with readers debating such topics as breast fetishes, Little Lulu and

The Long Goodbye. What unifies this fanzine, too, though, is the editors' personalities. The Luttrells' wide-ranging interest in sf, fandom, comics, film, mysteries, and life-in-general are well suggested by Joe Staton's cover.

Most obviously, this tenth anniversary issue is shaped by an awareness of *Starling's* development in relation to its editors' lives. Hank's editorial describes the zine's evolution from a collection of eleven one-page sf stories, dating its changes by his own. "*Starling* 9 was published in early '67, after I had finished high school and started college. . . . Issue #23, published July '72, was our last Columbia issue." He also discusses its decade in terms of new contributors and friends, and of old enthusiasms, like Leigh's interest in comics, newly shared with readers. Each article is introduced by an account of the author's relationship with the fanzine. Finally, Leigh discusses the *Starling/Luttrell* future as both are affected by her life as a graduate physical anthropology student (or ghoul).

The constant here seems to be growth, not just in the fanzine's size but in its range; and the close relationship between the zine and its creators' expanding lives. I suspect that *Starling's* unusually long life is due to this flexibility; the Luttrells' zine evolves with them, while other editors with more rigid concepts of content, audience or format lose interest. I

know that unpredictability keeps me interested in reading it.

Significantly, the lettercolumn this issue occurs at the beginning, rather than the end of the zine. *Starling* is reader-oriented, another type of conversation with friends. Some of them lecture, giving you the benefit of their expertise; some share memories or new discoveries; some make jokes; all of them are fascinating.

The most memorable articles in *Starling* #27 are all "personal" in a sense, in being rooted in an individual's desire to share an interest with us, although only one uses the pronoun "I." Bob Tucker's "One Thousand and One Nights at the Bijou" begins: "When I was 17½ years old my father apprenticed me out as a projectionist in a sleazy little downtown theatre affectionately known to its patrons as 'The Bucket of Blood.'" Bob describes his forty-year career until automation came to the first-run cinemas and the beloved "Bucket" was torn down to make room for the new courthouse; he comments on the films he showed and the film processes that came along; but mostly he remembers with affection the movie houses, their patrons and the stars of the thirties.

At the opposite extreme, Jerry Kaufman's "Haber is Destroyed on *The Lathe of Heaven*" is a serious discussion of the Taoist concepts which shape the LeGuin novel; but it is personal too, an appreciation flowing from

his own reverence for novel and philosophy.

Meanwhile, out in left field, Angus Taylor, cleverly disguised as "Controversial young British novelist G.J. Mallard," combines his interest in experimental sf, his unique sense of humour, his love of the bizarre, his job, and alter-ego, and Crangle's Auto Body to produce "Crush! (Work in Progress)."

"Cartwright died yesterday in his last magazine crush. When I entered the periodicals room at the Spaced Out Library, shouldering my way past staring onlookers, I could make out his spectral head, squashed flat between pages 134 and 135 of the April 1051 issue of Thrilling Wonder Stories like a waxed leaf. I watched meditatively as the police hauled his body away, their plastic riot suits glinting like deliquescing armadillos in the fitful sunlight, their heraldic badges like the rows of tomato soup cans in a nearby supermarket. Turning once more to the magazines scattered before me like the fossilized imprints of ancient beasts, I carefully removed Cartwright's head from its position between the giant mammaries of a Jovian space princess, carried it downstairs and filed it in Ephemera under C. From outside the sounds of colliding Edsels drifted on the turgid air, evoking the image of my first wife, spread-eagled on her bed among grim-faced teddy bears."

This issue of *Starling* also con-

tains information on the Down Under Fan Fund which sent Leigh to Australia in 1972. In return, the editors are conducting an auction of fannish material for the Fund's benefit; and are donating the proceeds from the sale of this issue (75¢, not the usual 50¢) as well. It's an excellent fanzine to sample for a worthy cause.

NOTES FROM THE CHEMISTRY DEPARTMENT #2 (Denis Quane, Box CC, E. Texas Station, Commerce, Texas 75428; monthly, mimeo; 12 pp., 25¢ or 3 8¢ stamps. January, 1974)

Notes is a personalzine with a difference. Editor Quane talks about his interests in science and sf, rather than his life. In this issue, with its attractive logo by Nancy Wallace, he reprints a review from *The American Scientist* of *Project Cyclops*, subtitled "A Design Study of a System for Detecting Extraterrestrial Intelligent Life." He also refers readers to a paper in *Icarus* in interstellar communication by Robert Dixon, who worked on *Project Cyclops*. What particularly interests Quane, in this paper, is the concept of the size of space. Ironically, he is severely limited by the size of his own medium of communication, so that he ends his discussion at the beginning of the problem: "How many science fiction stories give us any real gut feeling for the immensity of space, even in our own neighbourhood?"

I'd recommend *Notes* to readers who share a strong interest in the science aspect of sf.

Other Fanzines:

BANSHEE #1 (Michael Gorra, 199 Great Neck Rd., Waterford, CT 06385; irregular, mimeo; 31 pp., 35¢. January, 1974) Spotty repro, interesting lettercol, good potential. Watch this one.

BREAKTHROUGH #3 (Henry Bitman, P.O. Box 968, Azusa, CA 91702; thrice-yearly, mimeo; 24 pp., available by request. April, 1974, is what it says; it arrived in February) Fanfiction, an essay on time travel in mainstream fiction, fanzine reviews. Not a fanzine; the editor pays for contributions.

KARASS #1 (Linda Bushyager, 1614 Evans Ave., Prospect Park, PA 19076; monthly, mimeo; 10 pp., 25¢, 4/\$1. January 1974) Planned as a newszine-plus, with short reviews, art, humour, con-reports, and whatever else Linda gets (but no lettercol.) Worth supporting.

THE SPANISH INQUISITION #1 (Jerry Kaufman, 622 W. 114th St., Apt. 52A, New York, NY 10025; irregular, xeroxed; 11pp., available by request. January, 1974) Produced for CAPRA, the film-apa; discussions of film, interspersed with autobiography, seasoned with Jerry's offbeat sense of humour. Fun.

(cont. on page 125)

Cursing and muttering, the Wind-runner came about and sailed back the way he had come, with Kurgech and Jemasze walking behind. Halting beside the land-yawl the Wind-runner ill-naturedly passed across the goods he had taken.

Jemasze asked: "Where are you bound?"

"To the depot, where else?"

"Seek out Moffamides the priest; tell him you have met us; tell him what occurred, and tell him that if the fiaps guarding the sky-car are as false as those he gave us, we'll take him down to the Alouan and lock him in a cage forever. He'll never escape us; we'll follow his track wherever he goes. Take him that message, and be certain that he hears you out!"

The Wind-runner, clench-mouthed with rage, tacked off into the south on a freshening breeze.

Elvo and Jemasze loaded the yawl while Kurgech boiled the crayfish for lunch to be consumed on the way. The sails were hoisted; the yawl rolled briskly into the northeast.

At noon Kurgech pointed across the bow to the sails of three lofty brigantines bellying in the wind. "The first of the tracks."

"If Moffamides gave us proper directions."

"He gave us proper directions; I read at least this much truth in his mind. I read mischief as well, and this has been demonstrated."

"I understand now why Outkers

seldom visit the Palga," said Elvo glumly.

"They are not welcomed; this is true."

The brigantines passed in front of the yawl: three beer-wagons, each loaded with three enormous hogsheads. The crews watched the yawl incuriously and ignored Elvo Glissam's wave.

The yawl crossed the track—an avenue of compressed soum—and pointed once more across the open sarai.

An hour later they sailed past another set of irrigated tracts. Wind-runner families worked at the plots: tilling, pulling weeds, harvesting legumes, plucking fruit, their sail-wagons standing nearby. At mid-afternoon the yawl overtook just such a wagon: a six-wheeled schooner with a pair of high masts, three jibs and top-sails. Two men leaned on the after rail; children played on the deck; a woman peered through the casements of the aft cabin as the yawl approached. Elvo steered to pass downwind, which he deemed to the courteous tactic. The Wind-runners however failed to recognize the nicety and gave no acknowledgement to Elvo's cheerful wave. Peculiar people, thought Elvo glumly. Shortly after the schooner changed course and trundled off to the north, to become a far white spot, then disappear.

The wind had become gusty; to the south a scurf of black clouds rose up into the sky. Jemasze and

Kurgech reefed the mainsail, lowered the mizzen and took in the jib; still the yawl bowled across the soum on hissing wheels.

The clouds raced overhead; rain began to fall. The three men hauled down all sails, braked and blocked the wheels, tossed to the ground a heavy metal chain connected through the shrouds to the lightning rod, then took refuge in the aft cuddy. For two hours lightning clawed at the sarai, generating an almost continuous reverberation of thunder; then the storm drifted north; the rain stopped; the wind died, leaving behind an uncanny silence.

The three men crawled forth from the cuddy to find the sun setting through a confused storm-wrack and the sky an inverted carpet of flaring purple-red. While Gerd Jemasze and Elvo put the yawl to rights, Kurgech boiled up a soup in the forward cuddy, and the three men took a supper of papaws, soup and hard-bread.

A slow and easy breeze came to blow the remaining storm-clouds north; the sky was clear and effulgent with stars. The sarai seemed utterly vacant and lonely, and Elvo was surprised to find Kurgech in a state of obvious uneasiness. After a few minutes Elvo became infected with nervousness and asked: "What's the trouble?"

"Something is drawing upon us."

Jemasze raised his hand to feel the wind. "Shall we sail for an

hour or two? There's nothing we can run into."

Kurgech readily agreed. "I will be happy to move."

The sails were hoisted; the yawl swerved around and bore off on a quartering reach into the northeast, at an easy ten miles an hour. Kurgech steered by Koryphon's North Star Tethanor, the Toe of the Basilisk.

Four hours they sailed, until midnight, when Kurgech declared: "The imminence is gone. I no longer feel pressure."

"In that case, it is time to stop," said Jemasze. The sails were dropped; the brakes were set; the three laid out their beds and slept.

At dawn they hoisted sail in preparation for the morning wind, which once more came tardily, and the three men sat silently waiting. At last the monsoon arrived and the yawl slid off into the northeast.

After an hour of sailing they crossed the second track, though no sails were visible save a tall narrow triangle far astern.

The sarai began to rise and fall, at first almost imperceptibly, then in long wide hills and dales. Ledges of black trap slanted up from the soum, and for the first time navigation demanded a degree of foresight and strategy. The easiest route most usually lay along the ridges, where the wind blew most freshly and where the ground lay generally flat. Often these ridges ran in inconvenient

directions; then the helmsman must direct the craft down one slope and up that one opposite, and often the auxiliary motor was needed to propel the yawl the last fifty or hundred feet to the ridge.

A river meandered across the countryside, at the bottom of a steep-sided terraced valley where the land-yawl could not go, and for several miles they sailed along the brink of the valley, until the river once more swung north.

The tall-sailed wagon they had noticed previously had gained appreciably upon them. Jemasze took binoculars and inspected the craft, then handed the glasses to Kurgech who looked and uttered a soft Uldra curse.

Taking the binoculars, Elvo saw a long black articulated wagon of three segments, each with a notably tall mast and narrow sail: a vehicle intended for high speed and high capability into the wind. Five men rode the deck, hanging to the shrouds or crouched in the cockpit. They wore loose black pantaloons; their torsos were naked and showed the typical cream-brown Wind-runner color. Several wore red scarves to bind their hair. As they moved about the deck they displayed a peculiar jerking agility, which by some trick of association recalled to Elvo the fearsome man who had entered the inn three nights previously. So then: these were Srenki, men whose virtue was the excess of vice, who with leaden zest performed quintessential evil

and so redeemed their fellows from turpitude. Elvo's stomach felt cold and heavy. He looked toward Gerd Jemasze, who seemed interested only in the terrain ahead. Kurgech stood by the mast, looking vaguely off into the sky. Elvo began to feel a sweaty desperation; he had come on this trip for complicated reasons, but certainly not in search of death. With loose knees he crossed the cockpit to where Gerd Jemasze stood by the wheel. "Those are Srenki."

"I supposed as much."

"What are you going to do?"

Jemasze glanced over his shoulder at the racing black schooner. "Nothing, unless they molest us."

"Isn't that what they plan?" cried Elvo, his voice rather more shrill than he had intended.

"It looks that way." Jemasze looked up at the sail. "We could probably outrun them straight downwind; their sails tend to blanket each other."

"Then why don't we sail downwind?"

"Because the river valley lies yonder."

Through the binoculars Elvo inspected the black wagon. "They're carrying guns—long rifles."

"Hence I don't shoot at them. They'd shoot back. Apparently they want to take us alive."

Again Elvo studied the onrushing black schooner, until the gestures and grimaces of the Srenki affected him with nausea. In a

stifled voice he asked: "What will they do with us?"

Jemasze shrugged. "They're wearing red, which means they've taken vows of revenge. Somehow we've offended them, though I can't imagine how or where or when."

Elvo Glissam scanned the downwind terrain through the binoculars. He called out to Jemasze: "There's a hill ahead! It's too steep to cross and it slopes down into the river valley; we'll have to come about!"

Jemasze demurred. "They'd have us in twenty seconds."

"But—what can we do?"

"Sail. You stand by the reef-roller and make ready to shorten sail when I give you the signal."

Evo stared numble at Jemasze. "Shorten sail?"

"Not until I give you the signal."

Elvo hunched to the mast and stood by the reefing gear. The Srenki had narrowed the gap to a hundred yards; the three tall sails seemed to overhang the yawl. To Elvo's amazement Jemasze slackened the sheets to slow the yawl and to allow the schooner to gain even more swiftly. The Srenki could now be perceived in detail. Three stood on the foredeck straining forward, the gaunt faces shadowed under the vertical pink sunlight. To Elvo's consternation, Jemasze once again eased the sheets, allowing the Srenki to gain at an even faster rate. Elvo opened his mouth to scream a

protest, then in blind desperation clamped his teeth together and turned away.

Ahead the ground began to slope down toward the river gorge on one hand, up to a round-topped bluff on the other; the yawl heeled and skidded. Behind the black schooner came rushing, so close that Elvo could hear the hoarse calls of the crew. The slope steepened; the yawl tilted precariously; Elvo, peering over the gunwhale, looked a sickening distance down, down, down into the river gorge; he squeezed shut his eyes and clung to the mast. The wind swept down the hillside; the yawl bounced crab-wise down-slope. "Reef!" called Jemasze. Elvo cast a wild glance astern. The schooner, careening along the slope, was closing in fast; a Srenki on the foredeck hefted a grapnel, preparing to throw it into the cockpit of the yawl. "Reef!" Jemasze called in a voice of brass.

With numb fingers Elvo turned the handle and the mainsail rolled down the mast. A gust hit the yawl; the weather wheels lifted. Elvo's stomach lifted with vertigo; he scrambled for the high side of the deck. The same gust struck the tall sails of the schooner and applied an inexorable leverage. As the weather wheels left the ground, the helmsman put down the helm to prevent a capsize; the schooner trundled wildly down-slope, out of control. The wheels bounded off rocks and bumps; the

tall masts jerked and shivered; the sails bulged and flapped. On one of the wilder lurches the mizzen jibed, the helmsman spun the wheel; the schooner bounced off a boulder, flew off a ledge and toppled upside down into the river.

"Reef down!" bawled Jemasze. Elvo cranked the sail almost to invisibility. Jemasze cut on the auxiliary motor. At a careful pace the yawl negotiated the slope of the hill and reached the flatland beyond. Jemasze set the course into the northeast as before.

The yawl sailed across the deserted sarai, through an afternoon so peaceful that Elvo began to doubt the accuracy of his recollection; had the Srenki existed? Sur-reptitiously he studied Kurgech and Gerd Jemasze, one hardly more cryptic than the other.

The sun sank in a clear sky. The sails were lowered; the wheels locked, and camp made for the night out in the middle of the trackless sarai.

After a supper of potted meat, biscuit and Depot beer, the three men sat on the foredeck, leaning against the cuddy. Elvo could not restrain a question to Gerd Jemasze: "Did you plan that the Srenki schooner should be wrecked?"

Jemasze nodded. "I claim no great wisdom. With their narrow beam and three tall masts they obviously couldn't reach along much of a slope. So I thought to tease them until they sailed themselves down to the river."

Elvo gave a shaky chuckle. "Suppose they didn't go over?"

"We'd have set them back some other way," said Jemasze indifferently.

Elvo fell silent, reflecting that Jemasze's confidence, while reassuring, perfectly typified that quality which Elvo found so exasperating. . . Elvo managed a sad chuckle. Jemasze felt competent to meet any challenge. He, Elvo, did not, and in consequence felt resentful: there was the truth of the matter. Elvo assuaged his abraded self-esteem with the reflection that here, at least, was a faculty in which he excelled Gerd Jemasze: he was capable of self-analysis. Gerd Jemasze had obviously never troubled to ponder his own psyche.

He turned to Kurgech and asked a question he never could have asked two weeks previously: "Is anyone on our trail now?"

Kurgech stared off across the twilight. "I feel no near threat. A dark mist hangs around the horizon, far away. Tonight we are safe."

Chapter IX

MORNING BROUGHT a brisk cool breeze and with all sail set, the yawl bowled across the gently heaving sarai: a landscape, thought Elvo, fresh and sweet as springtime. Bustards flew up from under the singing wheels; patches of pink and black periwinkles splotched the otherwise dun

soum.

Halfway through the morning they sighted a fleet of brigantines sailing northward, sails straining to the wind: a signal that they had arrived at the third trail, as stipulated by Moffamides. A few minutes later they reached the trail itself, which to Elvo's puzzlement led not north but definitely into the northwest. "We've come a hundred miles or more out of the way," he complained to Jemasze. "If we had sailed north out from the Depot instead of northeast we might have saved ourselves a day's sail."

Jemasze gave somber agreement. "Moffamides evidently preferred that we come this route."

The yawl overtook the housewagons. Tousle-headed children hung on the rail and pointed; men stood up from the cockpit to stare; women came forth from the cabins, their expressions neither affable nor hostile. As usual Elvo essayed a friendly salute, which the Wind-runners ignored.

The trail descended from a region of great heaves and swales upon a flat plain reaching north beyond the horizon. At intervals sink-holes brimming with clear water irrigated fields and plots where grew melons, pulses, sweet vetch and cereals, each area guarded by its fiap.

Northwest across the plain sailed the yawl, sometimes in company with Wind-runner brigantines, more often alone. Long sunny days alternated with

nights glittering with stars. Elvo often reflected that here was a life to be envied, a life without circumscription and no routine other than that imposed by the winds and the seasons. Perhaps the Wind-runners were the most sensible folk of all Koryphon, scudding as they did across the open places, with great clouds towering above and glorious sunsets to mark the end of each day.

On the fourth afternoon along the northwest trail, a dark smudge appeared on the horizon, which the binoculars revealed to be a forest of massive dark trees, of a species Elvo had never seen before. "This must be Aluban forest," said Jemasze. "We now proceed to a white pillar."

Presently the pillar appeared: an object thirty feet high, constructed of a white lumpy stucco-like substance. At the base of the pillar an old man in a white cassock worked a pestle in a large iron mortar. The yawl coasted to a halt beside the pillar; the old man rose to his feet and, showing the clench-faced glare of a zealot, backed protectively against the white pillar. "Take care with your vehicle; this is the Great Bone; steer aside."

Jemasze performed a courteous gesture to which the old man made no response. "We seek a certain Poliamides," said Jemasze. "Can you direct us?"

Before the old man deigned to answer he dipped a brush in the

mortar and applied a white wash to the pillar. Then he pointed the brush toward the forest and spoke in a harsh croaking voice: "Follow the trail; inquire at the hexagon."

Jemasze released the brake; the yawl sailed past the Great Bone toward the Aluban.

At the forest's edge Jemasze halted the wagon; the three men descended warily to the ground. The trees were the most ponderous growths Elvo had yet observed on Uaia: great twisted baulks the color and apparent density of black iron, with sprawling heavy branches and masses of pale gray and gray-green foliage. For several silent moments the three men stood peering into the forest, where the trail wound away among slanting sunrays and black shadows. Listening, they heard only a dank stillness.

Kurgech said in a heavy voice: "We are expected."

Elvo suddenly became aware that by some tacit understanding leadership of the group had transferred to Kurgech, who now muttered to Jemasze: "Let Elvo stay with the wagon; you and I will go forward."

Elvo attempted an uneasy protest, but the words stuck in his throat. In an awkward attempt at facetiousness he said: "If you run into trouble, call out for help."

Kurgech said: "There will be no trouble. No hot blood spills in this sacred forest."

Jemasze said softly: "I fear Mofamides has played us a sour joke."

"So much was clear from the first," said Kurgech. "Still, it is better to play the game out, and to act in certitude."

The two set off into the forest and immediately foliage closed out the sky; the trail became narrow and wound back and forth, past banks of moss and clusters of pale star-flowers; in and out of small glades, along dim aisles with pink rays slanting across the vastas. Kurgech moved with a peculiar delicacy, striding on the balls of his feet, turning his head first one way, then the other. Jemasze felt only stillness and peace; he apprehended no danger, nor did Kurgech's attitude suggest more than wariness in the proximity of the unknown.

A glade carpeted with purple sedum opened before them; here stood a hexagonal structure of white stone, twice as tall as a man, open on all sides to the slow airs of the forest. In front of the structure a priest in a white cassock awaited them: a man frail and cold-faced. "Outkers," said the priest, "you have come far, and you are welcome to share the peace of our forest Aluban."

"We have come far indeed," said Jemasze. "As you know we have come in search of Poliamides. Will you take us to him?"

"Certainly, if this is your wish. Come then." The priest set off through the forest; Jemasze and Kurgech followed. The sun was low; the forest had become dim

and dark. Looking up, Jemasze stopped short at the sight of a white object: a skeleton in the crotch of the tree. The priest said: "There sits Windmaster Boras Mael, who suspires his soul through the leaves, and who has given his right toe to the Great Bone." He signaled them forward.

Jemasze looking aloft saw skeletons in many of the trees.

The priest, halting once more, spoke in a plangent voice: "Here all weary or troubled souls make their peace with Ahariszeio. Their transitory flesh is buried; their bones embrace the tree; the soul is absorbed and purified and suspired into the holy air of the Palga, to ride the blissful clouds."

"And Poliamides?"

The priest pointed aloft. "There sits Poliamides."

Jemasze and Kurgech studied the skeleton for a moment. Jemasze asked: "How did he die?"

"He went into an introspection so earnest that he neglected to eat or drink, and presently his condition became indistinguishable from death. The errors of his gross vitality are now forgotten and his soul breathes out from the leaves."

With an edge in his voice, Jemasze asked: "Moffamides told you of our coming?"

Kurgech spoke in a low profound voice: "Speak truth!"

The priest replied: "Moffamides explained your presence, as was his duty."

"Moffamides has used us

poorly," said Jemasze. "He has wantonly dealt us deceit. We have quite a score to settle with him."

"Patience, my friends, patience and forbearance! Go back now to your Outker lands in humility rather than anger."

"First we will deal with Moffamides."

"Surely you have no grievance with Moffamides," declared the priest. "You required the presence of Poliamides and behold! you have been vouchsafed your desire."

"So we are sent forth on a week's journey with useless flaps to look at a set of bones? Moffamides will not long enjoy his triumph."

The priest spoke gravely: "It might be wise to moderate your anger. Moffamides truly did you a beneficial service. If you take his intimations to heart, you will apprehend the sorry consequences of ignoble curiosity. Such knowledge is beyond value. Poliamides, for instance, so far overlooked propriety as to accept an Outker's bribe. When he recognized his fault, he suffered a pang of guilt and became moribund."

"I feel that you exaggerate the benign effects of Moffamides' treachery," said Jemasze. "He will not soon again deceive trusting strangers, I assure you of this."

"The Palga is vast," murmured the priest.

"The spot on which Moffamides

stands is small," said Jemasze. "We can discover this spot through Blue magic. As for now, we have seen sufficient of Poliamides."

The priest turned wordlessly and led the way back through the forest to the hexagon. Mounting the white stone porch, he stood smiling impassively. Kurgech stared up at him. Slowly Kurgech raised his right hand. The priest's eyes followed the movement. Kurgech raised his left hand, and the priest smiling a now strained smile, seemed to watch both hands separately, an eye for each. From Kurgech's left palm came a sudden shattering blast of white light. Kurgech called out in a deep calm voice: "Speak what is in your mind!"

Thrusting through the priest's lips, as if of their own volition, came words: "You will never live to see Outker land, poor fools!"

"Who will kill us?"

The priest had recovered his poise. "You have seen Poliamides," he said shortly. "Now go your way."

Jemasze and Kurgech returned by the now nearly invisible track to the edge of Aluban the sacred forest.

Elvo, standing against the stern of the yawl, was a forlorn and worried figure; at the sight of Gerd Jemasze and Kurgech, he came forward in obvious relief. "You've been gone so long; I began to wonder what had happened to you."

"We found Poliamides," said Jemasze. "His right toe is part of the Great Bone. In short—he is a dead skeleton."

Elvo stared toward the forest indignantly. "Why did Mof-famides send us here?"

"This is as good a place as any to hang up our bones."

Elvo stared at Jemasze as if doubting his seriousness, then turned and looked dubiously into the Aluban. "What does he gain?"

"I guess they don't want Outkers investigating the erjin trade—especially members of the SEE."

Elvo grinned wanly at the pleasantry. Jemasze held up his hand to a faint cool breeze seeping down from the north. "Hardly enough to move us."

"This is not a good place," said Kurgech. "We should depart."

Jemasze and Elvo Glissam hoisted the sails. The yawl responded sluggishly and rolled south along the edge of the forest.

The breeze died; with limp sails the yawl coasted to a stop, only fifty feet distant from the loom of the trees. "It appears that we camp here," said Jemasze.

Kurgech looked toward the forest, but said nothing.

Jemasze lowered the sails and blocked the wheels; Kurgech rummaged among the stores in the forward cuddy; Elvo gingerly approached the edge of the forest and returned with an armful of fuel. Jemasze grunted with something like disapproval but made

no protest as Elvo kindled a fire beside the yawl.

- For supper they ate bread and dry meat, a few morsels of dried fruit, and drank the last of the Depot beer. Elvo discovered himself to be neither hungry nor thirsty; he felt rather a strong lassitude, and could think only of stretching himself out beside the fire and drowsing away. . . . What a curious fire, thought Elvo. The flames seemed to be made not of hot leaping gases, but syrup or jelly; they moved sluggishly, like the petals of a monstrous red flower blowing in a warm wind. Elvo looked languidly toward Gerd Jemasze to see whether or not he had noted this odd phenomenon. . . . Jemasze conversed with Kurgech; Elvo heard what they were saying: ". . . strong and near."

"Can you break it?"

"Yes. Bring wood from the forest—and six long poles."

Jemasze spoke to Elvo. "Wake up. You're being hypnotized. Help me bring wood."

Numbly Elvo lurched to his feet and followed Jemasze to the forest. He now felt alert and awake, and burning with rage. Jemasze's arrogance for a fact knew no bounds; an outrage the way he presumed to give orders! Well then, what of this heavy gnarled branch? An excellent club.

"Elvo!" rasped Jemasze. "Wake up!"

"I am awake," muttered Elvo.

"Well then, carry wood to the fire."

Elvo blinked, yawned, rubbed his eyes. He had been asleep. Sleepwalking, thinking terrible thoughts. He dragged dead branches to the fire. Kurgech cut six crooked poles and planted them into the ground to form a hexagon twelve feet in diameter, and connected the top ends with lengths of cord. Between the poles he built six small fires and on the cords he hung small trifles of equipment: clothes, binoculars, hand-guns: all articles imported to the Palga.

"Stay inside the ring of fires," said Kurgech. "We have made this alien land; they must now put forth great force to reach us."

Elvo said plaintively: "I don't understand anything of what's happening."

"The priests are using mind-magic against us," said Kurgech. "They use their holy objects and ancient instruments, and they can exert great power."

"Don't allow yourself to day-dream or go drowsy," Jemasze told him. "Keep the fires alight."

Elvo said shortly, "I'll do my best."

Minutes passed: ten, fifteen, twenty. Peculiar, thought Elvo, how the fires tended to smoulder rather than burn. The flames guttered and recoiled in smoky red wallows of flame. Out in the darkness he sensed squat shapes watching him with eyes like puddles of ink.

Jemasze said: "Don't panic; just ignore them."

Elvo laughed hoarsely. "I'm sweating; I'm panting; my teeth are chattering. I'm not about to panic, but the fires are going out."

"I guess it's time I used some Outker magic," said Jemasze. He spoke to Kurgech: "Ask how they'd like a forest fire."

A queer stillness gripped the air. Jemasze picked up a flaming brand from the central fire, and took a step toward the Aluban.

Tension broke like a snapping twig. The fires blazed normally; Elvo saw no more crouching shapes, only the starlit landscape. Gerd Jemasze dropped the brand back in the fire and stood watching the forest in that pose of negligent disdain which Elvo had so often found irritating. He felt for breeze; the night was dead calm; they lacked the option to move away, out upon the wholesome sarai.

Kurgech remarked: "Rage and fear hang in the air. They may attempt more ordinary work."

Suddenly in a mood of urgency, Jemasze said: "To the forest then, where at least we are safe from ambush."

The three men climbed into trees and became invisible in the deep gloom under the foliage. Twenty yards away, out on the sarai, the land-yawl stood alone in the firelight. For the hundredth time, Elvo reflected that if by some lucky chance he eventually

were restored to the security of Olanje, he would have memories to color the remainder of his lifetime. He doubted if ever again he would undertake a journey across the Palga. . . He strained his ears. Silence. He could see neither Kurgech nor Jemasze who had ensconced themselves somewhere off to his left. Elvo gave a sad humorless chuckle. The whole affair seemed absurd and melodramatic—until he remembered how the landscape surrounding the yawl had constricted and pressed in upon him.

Time passed. Elvo began to feel uncomfortable. The time must be midnight. He wondered how long Jemasze proposed to stay in the tree. Surely not till dawn! In another five or ten minutes either Jemasze or Kurgech must certainly decide that the threat had diminished, that it was time to get some rest.

Ten minutes went by, and fifteen, then half an hour. Elvo took a breath, in preparation for calling cautiously across the dark, to find how much longer they meant to perch in the trees. He opened his mouth, then closed it again. Jemasze might disapprove of such a call. He had not expressly commanded silence, but Elvo could see that silence might be considered an integral adjunct to the circumstances. He decided to hold his tongue. Kurgech and Jemasze no doubt were also uncomfortable; if they could endure the inconvenience, he could do so

as well. To ease his cramped legs Elvo cautiously rose to a standing position. His head bumped on a branch which swung away and scraped his cheek. Elvo leaned back to see silhouetted against the sky, not a branch, but a skeleton, the bones wired together. Beside his face dangled the right foot. Heart pumping, Elvo quickly returned to his former position.

A sound, a thud, muffled noises, a thrashing among the dry leaves. Elvo jumped to the ground, to find Jemasze and Kurgech looking down at the hulk of a man prone on the ground. Elvo started to speak: Jemasze signaled him to silence. . . No sound. A minute passed. The man at their feet began to stir. Jemasze and Kurgech dragged him toward the yawl. Elvo picked up a long metal object and followed, and discovered the object to be a Wind-runner rifle. Jemasze and Kurgech dropped the man into the glow of firelight. Elvo uttered an ejaculation of surprise. "Moffamides!"

Moffamides stared into the fire with eyes like cusps of polished lint. He made no move when Kurgech bound his ankles and wrists, then, with Jemasze's help, tossed him up onto the deck of the yawl like a sack of beans.

Jemasze hoisted the sail, which belled to a cold night breeze Elvo had not even noticed. The yawl rolled away to the southeast, leaving the sacred forest Aluban eastern.

DAWN FLOODED THE SARAI with wan pink illumination. Clouds to south and west glowed crimson and rose; Methuen climbed into the sky.

At an oasis surrounded by feathery Uaian acacia the yawl made a breakfast halt. Moffamides had not yet spoken a word.

Beside the pond were neglected plots where fruit and berries grew wild. The fiaps were weathered and inoperative, and Elvo went off with a bucket to harvest whatever he found ripe.

When he returned he found Kurgech busy at the construction of a most peculiar device. From acacia withes he built a cubical frame two feet on the side, lashing the corners with twine. He cut up an old blanket, and attached it to the frame to make a rude box. Across one side of the box he attached a board through which he bored a hole half an inch in diameter.

The work was being accomplished out of Moffamides' range of vision. Elvo could no longer contain his curiosity; he asked Jemasze: "What is Kurgech making?"

"The Uldras call it a 'crazy box'."

Jemasze spoke shortly and Elvo, sensitive to real or imagined slights, forebore to ask any further questions. He watched in fascination as Kurgech cut a circle of fiberboard about six inches in diameter and painted it with a pair

of black and white spirals. Elvo marveled to watch the deftness of his touch. Suddenly he saw Kurgech in a new light: not the semi-barbarian with peculiar customs and odd garments, but a proud man of many talents. With embarrassment Elvo recalled his previously half-condescending attitude toward Kurgech—and this in spite of the fact that he was a member of the Redemptionist League!

Kurgech now worked more intricately, and an hour passed before he was satisfied with his contraption. The disk now turned on the inside of the box and was connected by a shaft to a small wind-powered propeller.

Elvo decided that he did not entirely approve of the device and what he divined to be its purpose; he watched in a mixture of repugnance and fascination as Kurgech, intent and earnest, completed his 'crazy-box'. In a somewhat sardonic voice Elvo asked: "Will it work?"

Kurgech turned him a cool clear glance, and asked softly: "Would you care to test it?"

"No."

Meanwhile Moffamides had sat propped on the deck of the yawl, in the full glare of Methuen, with neither food nor drink. Kurgech went to the forward cuddy and from his case of effects brought forth a vial of dark liquid. He poured water into a mug, mixed in a small quantity of the liquid and brought it to Moffamides.

"Drink."

Without words Moffamides drank. Kurgech applied a blindfold to the priest's eyes, then went to sit on the foredeck while Jemasze went to bathe in the pond.

Half an hour passed. Kurgech rose to his feet. He cut a pair of slits at right angles to each other in the cloth covering the bottom of the box, and a circular hole at the top. He now took up the box and placed it over Moffamides' head and arranged a pair of sticks across the priest's shoulders to support the device. After assuring himself that the propeller turned freely in the wind, Kurgech reached inside the box and removed the blindfold.

Elvo started to speak; Gerd Jemasze, returning from his bath, sternly signaled him to silence.

Ten minutes passed. Kurgech went to crouch beside Moffamides. He began to chant in a soft voice: "Peace; you rest at ease; sleep is sweet, when troubles dissolve and fear is gone. Sleep is sweet; tranquility is near. It is good to ease yourself; to rest and forget."

The propeller slowed as the wind eased; Kurgech flicked it with his finger to keep it turning, and inside the box the spiral-painted disk turned in front of Moffamides' eyes.

"The spiral turns," crooned Kurgech. "It brings out to in. It also brings you yourself from out to in, and you rest at ease. From

out to in, from out to in, and I say to you: how pleasant to relax where nothing can hurt you. Can anyone or anything hurt you?"

From within the box came Moffamides' voice: "Nothing."

"Nothing can hurt you unless I command, and now there is nothing but peace and rest and the ease of helping your friends. Who do you wish to help?"

"My friends."

"Your friends are here. The people here are your friends, and only these people here. Notice, they cut your bonds and make you comfortable." Kurgech released the cords binding Moffamides' arms and legs. "How pleasant to be happy and comfortable with your friends. Are you happy?"

"Yes, I am happy."

"The spiral has wound your attention into your brain and the only outside channel is my voice. You must now be deaf to other thoughts and the complaints of others. Only your friends, who give you peace and ease deserve your loyalty. Whom do you trust, whom do you wish to help?"

"My friends."

"And where are they?"

"They are here."

"Yes, of course. I will now take the box from your head and you will see your friends. Once, long ago, there were some trivial differences, but no one cares any more about these matters. Your friends are here; nothing else is important."

Kurgech lifted the box from Moffamides' head. "Breathe the fresh air and look at your friends."

Moffamides drew a deep breath and looked from face to face. His eyes were glazed; the pupils had constricted, perhaps under the influence of Kurgech's drug.

Kurgech asked: "Do you see your friends?"

"Yes, they are here."

"Of course! You are now one with your friends, and you want to help them in everything they do. The old ways were bad; your friends want to learn about the old ways so that you can rest at ease. There are no secrets among friends. What is your cult name?"

"Inver Elgol."

"And your private name, known only to yourself, which knowledge you now want to provide your friends?"

"Totulis Amedio Falle."

"How pleasant to share secrets with friends. It eases the soul. Where did Poliamides take the Outker?"

"To the Place of Rose-and-Gold."

"Ah, indeed! And what is this 'Place of Rose-and-Gold'?"

"It is where the erjins are trained."

"It must be an interesting place to visit. Where is it?"

"At Al Fador in the mountains west of Depot No. 2."

"And this is where Poliamides took the Outker Uther Madduc?"

"Yes."

"Is there danger there?"

"Yes, much danger."

"How could we go and be safe?"

"We could not go safely to Al Fador."

"Uther Madduc and Poliamides went to Al Fador and returned safely. Could we not do the same?"

"They saw Al Fador but made no close approach."

"We will do the same, if it is still safe to do so. How shall we steer?"

"Southwest, hard on the wind."

THE LAND-YAWL careened across the sarai. Moffamides sat hunched in a corner of the cockpit, apathetic, morose, silent. Elvo watched him in fascination. What went on in the priest's mind? Elvo attempted conversation to no avail; Moffamides merely stared at him.

Five days the yawl sailed, from dawn until dark, and later yet when the sarai lay flat and the stars provided guidance for the helmsman. The two trails were crossed; the yawl sailed a region to the north of the hill where they had made their first camp, then entered a hot and dreary tract where dust lay on the soum and lifted under the wheels as they passed. The Volwodes came into view: a far shadow across the south which became a cluster of steel-gray crags high against the sky.

Elvo was now as apathetic as Moffamides. He had lost all interest in the enslavement of the

erjins, which at any rate could most expeditiously be attacked from the forums of Olanje. Only a day's run to the south lay No. 2 Depot but he dared not suggest any truncation of the journey. As always, he found Gerd Jemasze's moods impenetrable. As for Kurgech, Elvo had reverted to his earlier opinions. The man was cunning and wise, competent in his own milieu, which was not necessarily the environment where Elvo himself cared to excel. All things considered, he would be pleased to return to Olanje. Schaine Madduc? A girl delicious to look at, with a head full of charming notions: by now she also must be bored with Uaia, and might well choose to accompany him back to Szintarre.

If he survived the visit to Al Fador. Elvo examined Moffamides, wondering as to his mental condition. Hypnotic suggestion, so he had been given to understand, could not be relied upon to persist. A clever ill-intentioned man like Moffamides might feign subservience, the more effectively to work an act of treachery. He voiced none of his suspicions to Jemasze or Kurgech who presumably knew as much about the matter as he did.

THE VOLWODES reached high into the pink-blue sky: barren crags marked with black thorn-bush and a few stunted sere-trees. When the yawl halted for the night, an erjin came to watch from a dis-

ance of about fifty yards: It lowly raised its massive arms and extended its talons to attack position; the ruff at its neck began to bristle. Jemasze brought forth his gun, but the erjin suddenly abandoned its aggressive posture. Its ruff subsided and after watching another minute it trotted off to the west.

"Curious conduct," mused Jemasze. Through his binoculars he watched the creature lope away. Elvo turned to find Moffamides staring after the erjin, and his posture was not that of a man dazed and subservient.

A few minutes later Elvo voiced his apprehensions to Gerd Jemasze.

"So far he's still under control," said Jemasze. "Kurgech has tested him. What may happen I don't know. If he wants to live he won't betray us."

"What of the erjins? Won't they attack us tonight?"

"Erjins don't see well in the dark. They're not likely to attack by night."

Elvo nevertheless went to his bed in a state of uneasiness. Far into the night he lay awake listening to the sounds of the sarai: a low moaning from the direction of the foothills which presently faded into silence; a chittering close at hand; an angry whirring at various intervals; from far away a throbbing song-like sound so exquisite that something strange rose up within Elvo's mind to terrify him. Kurgech had tied a steel cord

from Moffamides' ankle to his own, then had rubbed it with a dry rag until it squeaked and set Elvo's nerves on edge; whether for this reason or from the effect of the crazy-box, Moffamides lay inert the whole of the night.

Elvo awoke to find dawn-light burning the upper crags of the Volwodes.

Breakfast was brief and meager. Moffamides seemed more glum than ever and sat to the edge of the deck staring north, away from the mountains.

Jemasze went to squat beside him. "How far now to the training area?"

Moffamides looked up with a start, and the expressions of his face underwent a set of quicksilver changes: from abstraction to surly contempt, to affability and candor, to something swift and wild, like desperation. Elvo, watching, suspected that Kurgech's suggestions had ceased to exert an absolute influence over Moffamides.

Jemasze patiently repeated his question. Moffamides rose to his feet and pointed. "It lies somewhere beyond that ridge, toward the grim Volwodes. I have never been there. I can guide you no further."

Kurgech spoke in a mild voice: "I notice tracks yonder: perhaps they were laid by Uther Madduc."

Jemasze asked Moffamides. "Is this the case?"

"I suppose it is possible."

Hard on a breeze from the west, the yawl followed the tracks presumably laid by Uther Madduc's skimmer. A second set of tracks joined those which guided them, to Elvo's mystification. "It looks as if Uther Madduc had been followed!"

"More probably they are the tracks of Uther Madduc coming and Uther Madduc going," said Jemasze.

"I suppose you're right."

Below a bluff of red and gray sandstone Uther Madduc's trail came to an end. Jemasze dropped the sails and secured the brakes. Moffamides climbed laboriously to the ground and stood with shoulders hunched. "You need me no more," said Moffamides. "I have done my best for you; I will now take my leave."

"Here?" asked Jemasze. "In the wilderness? How will you survive?"

"I can reach the Depot in three or four days. There is food and water to be had along the way."

"What of the erjins? They infest the region."

"I fear no erjins; I am a priest of Ahariszeio."

Kurgech came forward and touched Moffamides on the shoulder; Moffamides leaned away quivering, but seemed unable to detach himself. Kurgech said: "Totulis Amedio Falle, you may now forget your worries; you are with your friends whom you wish to help and protect."

The priest's head jerked back;

his eyes took on a flinty glaze. "You are my friends," he declared without conviction. "This I know, hence, by corollary, I would grieve to see your corpses. So I must state that even now an erjin prince watched you. He has been talking to my mind; he wonders if he should attack."

"Tell him no," said Kurgech. "Explain that we are your friends."

"Yes, I have already done so, although my thoughts are somewhat confused."

Jemasze asked, "Where is the erjin?"

"He stands among the rocks."

"Invite him to come forth," said Jemasze. "I prefer erjins in full view to those skulking among the rocks."

"He is fearful of your guns."

"We will do him no harm if he restrains his own hostility."

Moffamides looked toward the rocks, and the erjin came forward, a magnificent creature as large as any Jemasze had ever seen, mustard-yellow on chest and belly, brown-black on back and legs. A russet ruff, starting between the ridges of cartilage shielding the optical processes, hung down across the bone-plated shoulders. It approached without haste, apparently neither fearful nor hostile, and halted at a distance of fifty feet.

Moffamides spoke to Jemasze. "It wants to know why we are here, instead of elsewhere?"

"Explain that we are travelers

from the Alouan, interested in the scenery."

Facing the erjin, Moffamides flourished his arms and uttered a set of hissing vocables. The erjin stood immobile except for a jerking of its ruff.

Kurgech instructed the priest: "Inquire the easiest route to the training station."

Moffamides performed new flourishes and uttered another set of sounds. The erjin responded as a man might, by turning and raising one of its massive arms, to indicate the southwest.

"Ask how far," said Jemasze.

Moffamides put the question; the erjin responded with a set of soft sibilants. "No great distance," said Moffamides. "Two hours more or less."

Jemasze looked skeptically sideways at the erjin. "Why is it here to meet us?"

Kurgech interposed a gentle remark: "Perhaps our friend Moffamides sent a mind-message ahead."

Moffamides said weakly: "Sheer chance, undoubtedly."

"Does it plan to attack us?"

"I can declare nothing with assurance."

Jemasze grunted. "I have never before seen a wild erjin so mild."

"The Volwode erjin is different from the wild erjin of the Alouan," said Moffamides. "It is a different race, so to speak."

Kurgech walked off in the direction the erjin had indicated and scrutinized the ground. He

called back to Jemasze: "The trail is here."

Jemasze looked at the yawl, then glanced at Elvo, who divined that Jemasze was about to require that he remain to guard the vehicle. Jemasze however turned to Moffamides. "We need a fiap to guard the wagon: of better quality than you provided before."

"The vehicle is safe," said Moffamides bluffly, "unless a band of Srenki pass by, which is hardly likely."

"Nevertheless, I would prefer to hang a strong fiap on the yawl."

With poor grace Moffamides took bangles and ribbons from the previous fiaps and contrived a new device. "It lacks magic; it is only an admonitory fiap but it will serve adequately."

The four men set forth up a barren gully, with Kurgech leading the way. Moffamides walked second, then Elvo, and Gerd Jemasze brought up the rear. The erjin followed at a discreet distance.

The way became steep; the gully caught and reflected the sun's pink heat; when the group reached the ridge they stood panting and sweating. The erjin came up to join them, standing so close to Elvo that his skin prickled. From the corner of his eye he glanced along the creature's arm, with its curious black talons and the finger-like palps sprouting from the base of the talons. With a single quick motion, thought

Elvo, the erjin could rip him to ribbons. Elvo gingerly sidled two or three steps away. He asked Moffamides: "Why is this creature so different from the Alouan erjins?"

Moffamides showed no interest in the subject. "There is no great difference."

"I notice considerable difference," said Elvo. "This creature is docile. Has it been tamed or trained?"

Moffamides put a question to the erjin, then replied to Elvo: "Kurgech is what it calls the 'ancient enemy', who displays a 'green soul' and hence the erjin's kill-fury* is not aroused. You and Gerd Jemasze are Outkers, and inconsequential."

Jemasze asked: "So why does it follow us?"

Moffamides replied in a dispirited voice: "It has nothing better to do; perhaps it intends to be of help."

Jemasze gave a snort of skepticism, and studied the landscape through binoculars, while Kurgech cast about the wind-scoured barrens for the trail of Uther Madduc, without immediate success.

The erjin moved forward past Elvo to attract the attention of Moffamides; a half-telepathic colloquy ensued. Moffamides called to Jemasze. "It says Uther Madduc crossed the plateau and traversed that middle ridge."

The erjin loped across the flat and stood waiting; when the men failed to respond briskly, it made urgent signals.

Kurgech went to investigate; the others followed more slowly. Kurgech scanned the seared rubble and somewhere saw signs to reassure him. "This is the trail."

The erjin led the way up a tumble of granite boulders, jumping from surface to surface without effort. At the ridge it paused and seemed almost to strike a conscious pose.

The men reached the ridge and again halted to rest. Beyond a slope supporting a sparse growth of brown scutch and wire-weed descended to the lip of a great gorge. The erjin started off again, on a long slantwise course, across a field of loose pebbles.

Elvo marveled at the trust Jemasze and Kurgech allowed the creature, which must by any sane reckoning be considered baleful. He put a tentative question to Jemasze: "Where do you think it's taking us?"

"Along Uther Madduc's trail."

"Aren't you suspicious of its good intentions? Suppose it's taking us on a wild goose chase?"

"Kurgech isn't worried. He's the tracker."

Elvo went to walk beside Kurgech. "Is this the way Uther Madduc came?"

Kurgech signified assent.

"How can you be sure? These

*Kill-fury: a weak rendering of a word signifying the explosive release of a vast pent quantity of emotion, like the breaking of a dam or throwing wide a gate.

rocks don't take tracks."

"The trail is evident. Notice: there a pebble has been disturbed. It shows a side which is not sunburned. See there: the web of dust has been broken. The erjin leads us accurately."

For a period the course led down-slope; then, where a gully seemed to afford a route to the bottom of the gorge, the erjin veered away. Kurgech stopped short. Jemasze asked: "What's the trouble?"

"Madduc and Poliamides went down that gully. The trail does not go where he wants to lead us."

They looked after the erjin, who has paused to make urgent signals. Moffamides said uneasily: "It takes you the way your friends came."

"Their trail leads down into the gorge."

"The erjin gives me information. The way is difficult here, but easier ahead."

Jemasze stood looking first one way, then the other. Elvo thought that he had never before seen Jemasze indecisive. Finally, without enthusiasm, Jemasze said: "Very well, we'll see where he takes us."

The erjin took them along a laborious route indeed: up a steep bank of crumbling conglomerate, across a tumble of boulders where small blue lizards basked and glided, up to a ridge and down the slope opposite. The erjin ran at an easy lope; the men strained

and panted to maintain the pace. Sunlight glared from the rocks and shimmered in the air across the gorge; the erjin danced ahead like a fire demon.

The erjin halted as if in sudden doubt as to its destination; Jemasze spoke tersely over his shoulder to Moffamides: "Find out where it's taking us."

"Where the other Outker went," said Moffamides hurriedly. "This way is easier than clambering down a cliff. You can see for yourself!" He indicated the terrain ahead, where the walls of the gorge relaxed and fell back. The erjin once more loped ahead, and led the way down to the floor of the valley, a place in dramatic contrast to the stark upper slopes. The air was cool and shadowed; a slow full stream welled quietly from pool to pool under copses of pink and purple fern-trees and dark Uaian cypress.

Kurgech studied the pale sand beside the stream and gave a grunt of grudging surprise: "The creature has not misled us. There are tracks; for a fact, Uther Madduc and Poliamides came this way."

The erjin moved off down the valley and signaled again, as urgent and impatient as before. The men followed more deliberately than it thought appropriate; it ran ahead, halted to look back, signaled and ran forward again. Kurgech, however, stopped short and bent his head over the tracks. "There is something peculiar

here."

Jemasze bent over the tracks; Elvo looked from the side, while Moffamides stood fretting and nervous. Kurgech pointed down at the sand. "This is the track left by Poliamides. He wears the flat-toed Wind-runner sandal. This, with the hard heel-mark, is the track of Uther Madduc. Before Poliamides walked first; he led the way with a nervous step, as might be expected. Here Uther Madduc walks first; he strides in excitement and haste. Poliamides comes behind, and notice where he pauses to look behind him. They are not approaching their goal; they are leaving, in stealth and haste."

All turned to look back up the valley, except Moffamides who watched the other three men and made small nervous gestures. The erjin whistled and fluted. Moffamides siad fretfully: "Let us not delay; the erjin is becoming capitious and may refuse to assist us."

"We need no more assistance," said Jemasze. "We're going back up the valley."

"Why go to the trouble?" cried Moffamides. "The tracks lead down-stream!"

"Nevertheless, this is where we wish to go. Inform the erjin that we no longer need its help."

Moffamides transmitted the message; the erjin gave a rumble of displeasure. Moffamides turned once more to Jemasze: "There is no need to go into the canyon!" But Jemasze had already started

along Uther Madduc's trail. The erjin approached on long silky strides, then uttered an appalling scream and bounded forward with arms extended and talons spread. Elvo stood paralyzed; Moffamides cowered; Kurgech jerked aside; Jemasze aimed his hand-gun and destroyed the creature as it sprang through the air.

The four men stood motionless, staring at the corpse. Moffamides began to moan softly under his breath. "Quiet!" growled Kurgech. Jemasze thrust the gun back into his waistband, then turned and continued up the canyon, the others following. Moffamides came at the rear, walking lethargically. He began to lag behind; Kurgech fixed him with a glare, and Moffamides obediently hurried his steps.

The valley walls, gradually steepening, became sheer precipices, reaching from the valley floor to the brink. In the soil grew copses of trees: jinkos, bangle-fruit, Uaina willow, blue-baise. Presently patches of cultivation became evident: yams, pulse, yellow-pod, tall white stalks of cereal molk, red pongee bushes burdened with purple-black berries. Here was a secret Arcadia, thought Elvo, still and quiet and solemn. He found himself walking with soft steps and holding his breath to listen. The trail became a narrow road; apparently they were close upon habitation.

The four men went forward even more warily, using the trees

for cover, keeping to the shadow of the steep south walls. Underfoot the ground suddenly became a pavement of pink marble, cracked and discolored. A great grotto opened into the side of the cliff, sheltering what appeared to be a temple of most intricate construction fabricated from rose quartz and gold.

Entranced, the four men approached the shrine, if such it were, and saw, to their stupefaction, that the entire edifice had been carved from a single mass of pink quartz, heavily shot with gold. The front facade, forty feet high, was disposed into seven tiers, each showing eleven niches. The quartz everywhere glowed with sheets and filaments of gold; with consummate craft the artisans had worked their scenes to the shape of the natural metal, and the carving of each niche seemed immanent to the rock itself, as if it had always existed, as if the scenes and subjects of the carvings were possessed of natural truth.

The subject matter of the carvings was battle, between stylized erjins and morphotes, both caparisoned in a strange and particular kind of armor or battle dress, using what appeared to be energy weapons of sophisticated design.

Elvo, in a rapturous daze, touched a carving, and where his fingertips removed a film of dust the rose quartz glowed with a light so vital that it seemed to

pulse like blood.

In the bottom tier, or gallery, six openings penetrated the shrine. Elvo entered the aperture farthest left and found himself in a tall narrow hall curving so as to emerge at the aperture farthest right. The light in the passage, filtered through several panes and screens of rose-quartz, seemed almost palpably dark rose-red, heavy as old wine. Every square inch had been carved with microscopic precision; gold shone bright, and every detail was evident. In awe Elvo walked the length of the hall. Emerging, he re-entered the shrine, using the next aperture toward the center; here the light was livelier and rose-coral, like the flesh of a canchineel plum. This passage was two-thirds the length of the first. Upon his exit he turned into the central passage, where the light glowed ardent pink, and the gold plaques and filaments glistened against the outside light.

Returning to the front he stood contemplating the seven-tiered facade. A treasure, he thought, to amaze the world, and worlds beyond, and the entire Gaean Reach! He approached and studied the detail. The stylistic conventions were almost incomprehensible; the organization of the various segments could not at once be grasped. It seemed that erjins battle morphotes, each group almost unrecognizable for its grotesque accoutrements; erjins flew through the air in vehi-

cles like none seen across the Gaean Reach; erjins stood triumphant above corpses of what seemed to be men. An insight came to Elvo, he turned in excitement to Gerd Jemasze: "This must be a memorial, or an historical record! In the passages are detail; the exterior niches are like a table of contents."

"As good a guess as any."

Kurgech had gone off to cast for tracks; he now returned, and indicated a ravine choked with blue jinkos, with a dozen pink parasol trees tilting crazily above. "Up on the brink we discovered Uther Madduc's tracks. They led down yonder gulch. Poliamides brought him here, then took him up the valley."

Elvo pondered the seven-tiered shrine of rose quartz and gold. He asked: "Is this Uther Madduc's wonderful joke? Why should he laugh at this?"

"There is more to see," said Jemasze. "Let's go on up the valley."

"Caution," said Kurgech. "Uther Madduc returned much faster than he went."

For a quarter-mile the track led beside the river, then into a copse of solemn black-gums which choked the valley floor.

Kurgech led the way, step by silent step. Methuen hung directly above; pink glimmer from ahead seeped through the forest, where the shadows were velvety black.

The path left the forest. Stand-

ing in concealment, the four men looked out at the compound from which erjins were sent forth to servitude.

Elvo's first emotion was deflation. Had he come so far, endured so much only to look at a few nondescript stone buildings around a dusty compound? He could sense that neither Jemasze nor Kurgech intended to make any closer investigation, and Moffamides displayed anxiety tantamount to sheer funk.

Moffamides tugged at Jemasze's arm. "Let us go at once. We stand here in peril of our lives!"

"Strange! You gave us no such previous warning."

"Why should I?" Moffamides spoke in spiteful desperation. "The erjin intended to take you to Tanglin Falls. By now you would be far away and gone."

"There's little to see," said Jemasze. "Where is the danger?"

"It is not for you to ask."

"Then we will wait and see for ourselves."

Into the compound came a dozen erjins, to stand in a desultory group. Four men in priestly white gowns emerged from one of the stone buildings; from another came two more erjins and another man, also dressed as a priest. Without warning, Moffamides lunged forward from the forest and ran yelling toward the compound. Jemasze cursed under his breath and snatched out his gun; he aimed, then made an exasperated sound and held his fire.

Elvo, watching in horror, felt a surge of gratitude toward Jemasze: unjust to kill the miserable Moffamides, who owed them no loyalty.

"We'd better leave," said Jemasze, "and quick. We'll go up the gulch where Madduc came down; that should be the shortest route back to the wagon."

They ran through the forest, along the trail beside the cultivation. They forded the river and made for the wooded ravine opposite the shrine.

From the forest burst a group of erjins. They saw the three men and veered in pursuit. Jemasze fired his hand-gun; one of the erjins, pierced by a needle of dexax, collapsed in a broken heap; the others fell flat and brought forth long Wind-runner guns. Jemasze, Kurgech and Elvo scrambled for the shelter of the trees at the mouth of the gully, and the pellets passed harmlessly by.

Jemasze aimed the gun carefully and killed another erjin, but behind came a dozen more, and Elvo cried out in frustration: "Run! It's our only chance! Run!"

Jemasze and Kurgech ignored him. Elvo looked frantically around the landscape, hoping for some miraculous succor. The sun had passed to the side; pink light suffused the gorge, and the seven-tiered shrine gave back an eerie beauty. Even in his terror Elvo wondered who had built it? Erjins, undoubtedly. How long ago? Under what circumstances?

Jemasze and Kurgech fired again and again at the erjins, who retreated into the forest. "They'll be climbing up from the valley and shooting down on us," said Jemasze. "We've got to reach the top first!"

Up the gully they climbed, hearts pounding in their chests, lungs aching for air. The sky began to open out, the rim of the table-land hung close above. From below came desultory shots, striking and exploding much too close for comfort; glancing back, Elvo saw erjins running easily after them up the trail.

They gained the rim of the table-land to stand sobbing for breath. Elvo dropped to his hands and knees, breath rasping in his throat, only to hear Jemasze's remark: "There they come. Let's get going!"

Elvo staggered to his feet and saw a dozen erjins at the edge of the plateau a quarter-mile to the north. Jemasze took a moment to scan the landscape. Due east, beyond a succession of descending ridges, slopes and gullies, the land-yawl awaited them. If they attempted to flee in this direction they would present targets to the long rifles of the erjins and soon be killed. A hundred yards south rose a broken pyramid of rotten gneiss: a natural redoubt which offered at least temporary protection. The three men scrambled up the loose scree to the top, finding an almost flat area fifty feet in diameter. Jemasze and Kurgech

immediately threw themselves flat and crawling to the edge began to shoot at the erjins on the plateau below. Elvo crouched low and, bringing forth his own weapon, aimed it but could not bring himself to fire. Who was right and who was wrong? The men had come as interlopers; did they have the right to punish those whose rights they had invaded?

Jemasze noted Elvo's indecision. "What's wrong with your gun?"

"Nothing. Just futility. That's all that's wrong. We're trapped up here; we can't escape. What's one more or less dead erjin?"

"If thirty erjins attack and we kill thirty, then we go free," explained Jemasze. "If we only kill twenty-five, then we are, as you point out, trapped."

"We can't hope to kill all thirty," Elvo muttered.

"I hope to do so."

"Suppose there are more than thirty?"

"I'm not interested in hypotheses," said Jemasze. "I merely want to survive." Meanwhile he aimed and fired his gun to such good effect that the erjins retreated.

Kurgech made a survey to the south. "We're surrounded."

Elvo went to sit on a ledge of rock. The sun, halfway down the western sky, threw his shadow across the barren surface. No water, thought Elvo. In three or four days they would be dead. He sat torpid, elbows on knees, head

hanging low. Jemasze and Kurgech muttered together for a period, then Kurgech went off to sit where he could overlook the eastern horizon. Elvo look at him in wonder: the eastern side of the crag was the least vulnerable to assault. . . . He took a deep breath and tried to pull himself together. He was about to die but he'd face the unpleasant process as gracefully as possible. He rose to his feet and walked across the flat. At the sound of his footsteps, Jemasze turned his head. His face became instantly harsh. "Get down, you fool!"

A pellet sang through the air. Elvo jerked to a cruel enormous blow. He fell to the ground and lay staring up at the sky.

Chapter xi

AT MORNINGSWAKE the days passed, one much like the next. Schaine and Kelse examined the casual and often enigmatic records left by Uther Madduc, and instituted a new system to facilitate management of the domain.

Each morning the two conferred over breakfast, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes in a state of contention. Schaine was forced to admit that, despite her natural affection for Kelse, she often did not like him very much. Kelse had become crabbed, rigid and humorless, for reasons beyond her understanding. Certainly Kelse had suffered greatly; still

his loss of arm and leg inconvenienced him little. In his place, she would never allow herself to brood! Another thought occurred to her. Perhaps Kelse loved someone who had rejected him because of his handicap.

The idea fascinated her. Who could it be?

Social life back and forth across the domains was gay; there were house-parties, balls, fiestas, "karoos": these latter pale imitations of the Uldra carnivals of lust, gluttony and psychological catharsis. Kelse agreed that he seldom attended such functions, so when from Ellora Domain arrived an invitation to an all-day picnic in the wonderful Ellora Garden, Schaine accepted for both herself and Kelse.

The picnic was a most delightful affair. Two hundred guests roamed the fifty-acre park which the Lilliet family had now maintained for two hundred years, each generation augmenting and improving the work of those before. Schaine enjoyed herself immensely, and meanwhile kept an interested eye upon Kelse. As she had expected he made no attempt to mingle with younger folk—after all, he was only two years her senior—but kept to the company of those land-barons present.

Schaine renewed many old acquaintances, and learned that, as she suspected, Kelse was considered shy and abrupt by the girls.

Schaine sought Kelse out and said, "You've just had some daz-

zling compliments. I probably shouldn't explain, because you might become vain."

"Small chance of that," grumbled Kelse, which Schaine took as an invitation to proceed.

"I've been talking to Zia Forres and she considers you most attractive. But she's afraid to talk to you for fear you might destroy her."

"I'm not all that irascible; and certainly not vain. Zia Forres can talk to me anytime she likes."

"You don't seem seem elevated by the compliment."

Kelse gave her a sickly grin. "It startles me."

"Well then—look pleasantly startled at least, not as if someone had dropped a rock on your foot."

"Which foot?"

"On your head then."

"To be quite honest my mind is on other things. There's been news from Olanje. The Redemptionists have finally persuaded the Mull to issue a definitive mandate—directed against us, naturally."

Schaine began to feel despondent. If only these discouraging problems would go away, or at least be forgotten, just for today! In a resigned voice she asked: "What kind of mandate?"

"The land-barons are ordered to meet with a council of tribal hetmen. We must abandon all pretence to legal title; said title must be affirmed to reside with the tribes traditionally resident on the domains. We retain the manors

and ten acres surrounding, and at the pleasure and discretion of the tribal councils, may apply for lease-holds not to exceed terms of ten years on other lands, and not to exceed one thousand acres per domain."

Schaine said flippantly, "It could be worse. They could sequester title to the houses as well."

"They've sequestered nothing as yet. A manifesto is words. We hold the land and we'll continue to hold it."

"That's not realistic, Kelse."

"It seems realistic to me. We've declared ourselves a political entity independent of the Mull; they no longer exert authority over us—if ever they did."

"Realism is this: Szintarre has a population of millions. The political entity you speak of has a population of a few thousand. The Mull exerts much more power. We've got to obey."

"Don't equate power with population," said Kelse. "Especially urban population. But there's no immediate worry—not from our side at least. We won't kill any Redemptionists unless they come here to kill us. I hope they think better of it."

Schaine turned away, furiously angry with Kelse and in the mood to do something wild and outrageous. She restrained herself and went to visit with her old friends, but the day had lost its zest.

RETURNING TO MORNINGSWAKE, Kelse and Schaine were surprised to find six Ao elders encamped on the lawn in front of the house, in a manner which Schaine thought portentous and somber. Kelse muttered, "Now what's the emergency?"

Schaine said: "They've also had the news from Olanje. They're here to get your signature on the lease."

"Not likely." Kelse nonetheless hesitated before he went to investigate. "You'd better wait in the house—just in case." And so Schaine, standing in the grand front parlor, watched through the window as Kelse crossed the lawn to where the Aos waited.

Kelse returned to the house faster than he had departed. Schaine ran out into the hall to meet him. "What's wrong?"

"I've got to take the Standard north. Zagwitz has had a message from Kurgech. A mind-message, needless to say, the substance of which is trouble."

Schaine's heart went up in her throat. "Do they know how, or why, or where?"

"I'm not sure what they know. They want me to take them up into the Volwodes."

"What about Gerd and Elvo?"

"They've nothing to say."

"I'll come with you."

"No. There's danger. I'll keep in touch with you by radio."

AT MIDNIGHT the skycar returned, with Kurgech, Gerd

Jemasze and Elvo Glissam barely conscious on an improvised stretcher. Kelse had already administered an all-purpose disinfectant and pain-suppressant from the sky-car's emergency kit. Gerd and Kurgech carried the stretcher into the sick-bay where Cosmo Brasbane the domain medica removed Elvo's clothes and gave him further medical attention.

Kurgech started to leave the house; Gerd called him back. "Where are you going?"

Kurgech said soberly: "This is Morningswake Manor and the traditions of your people are strong."

Gerd said, "You and I have been through too much together; if it weren't for you we'd all be dead. What's good enough for me is good enough for you."

Schaine, looking at Gerd Jemasze, felt an almost overwhelming suffusion of warmth; she wanted to laugh and she wanted to cry. Of course, of course! She loved Gerd Jemasze! Through prejudice and incomprehension she had not allowed herself to recognize the fact. Gerd Jemasze was a man of the Alouan; she was Schaine Madduc of Morningswake. Elvo Glissam? No.

Kelse said gruffly, and perhaps only Schaine apprehended the nearly imperceptible reluctance; "Gerd is quite right; formality can't apply to situations like this."

Kurgech shook his head and half-smiling, took a step backward. "The expedition is over;

conditions are once more as before. Our lives go differently, and this is as it should be."

Schaine ran forward. "Kurgech, don't be so solemn and fateful; I want you to stay with us. I'm sure you're hungry and I'm having a meal laid out."

Kurgech went to the door. "Thank you, Lady Schaine, but you are Outker, I am Uldra. Tonight I will be more comfortable with my own people." He departed.

IN THE MORNING Elvo Glissam, his shoulder bandaged and his left arm in a sling, limped down to the breakfast table, to find the others there before him, and all talking. Everyone felt at the same time emotionally flat, but superficially stimulated and almost euphoric, so that all kinds of remarks and opinions came forth that might not have been broached under different circumstances.

The talk went quickly and lightly, glancing on many subjects. In a weak but marveling voice, like a man describing a nightmare, Elvo Glissam recounted his version of the events of the past two weeks, which provided Schaine and Kelse a more particularized and personal account than that which they had gleaned from Gerd Jemasze.

Schaine asked in bewilderment: "But where is the 'wonderful joke'? I haven't heard anything even remotely funny."

"Father had an odd sense of humor," said Kelse, "if any."

"He must have had a sense of humor," declared Elvo. "From all I've heard of him he was a remarkable man."

"Well then," Schaine challenged him, "Where is the great joke?"

"It's too subtle for me."

Glancing sidewise at Gerd Jemasze, Schaine thought to detect a half-smile. "Gerd! You know!"

"Only a guess."

"Tell me! please!"

"Let me think about it; I don't know whether it's a joke or a tragedy."

"Tell us! Let us all judge!"

Gerd Jemasze started to speak, but hesitated too long, and Elvo, almost intoxicated from relief of tension, spoke first. "Joke or no joke, the shrine is a remarkable discovery. Morningswake will soon be a name as familiar as Gomaz and Sadhara! There'll be guided tours flying out from Olanjel!"

"We could put up a hotel and make a fortune," Schaine suggested.

"What would we do with a fortune?" growled Kelse. "We have all the money we need."

"If we're allowed to keep Morningswake."

"Bah. Who's to stop us? Don't say the Mull."

"The Mull."

"Once again—bah."

"I'll take the fortune. We need

another big saloon," said Schaine. "Remember, the Sturdevant is wrecked. I say, let's buy another Sturdevant."

Kelse threw up his hands. "How will we pay for it? Do you know how much a sound saloon car costs?"

"What's money? We'll run our own guided tours out to this wonderful exhibit. And don't forget: the hotel!"

Elvo asked: "Is that valley the Palga or the Retent or what?"

"I've been thinking about that," said Gerd Jemasze. "The gorge runs west and south out of the Volwodes. That's Ao country and Morningswake domain."

"No problem then," declared Elvo. "You own a magnificent historical monument, and you have every right to build a hotel!"

"Not so fast," said Kelse. "The Mull and the redemptionists say we own no more than the clothes on our back; who is right?"

"I agree the matter must be adjudicated," said Elvo. "Still, Redemptionist though I am, I wish the best for my friends here at Morningswake."

"Strange that the Aos know nothing about the shrine," said Gerd Jemasze. "I've checked the map; it's on Ao tribal land."

"It's also next to the Retent," said Kelse. "The Garganche might know about it."

"Aha!" cried Schaine. "All is clear. Jorjol has learned of the shrine; he wants to build a hotel, and that's why he wants to kick us

out of Morningswake!"

"I wouldn't put anything past Jorjol," said Kelse.

"You wrong poor Muffin," said Schaine. "He's really very simple, very straightforward, very open. I understand him completely."

"Then you're the only one," said Kelse.

"I also disagree," said Elvo. "Jorjol is a very complex person. He has no choice. Let's view him from the standpoint of the psychologist. He's an Outker and an Uldra at the same time: two sets of ideas work in his one brain. He can't have a thought without finding an instant contradiction. It's a wonder he's as effective as he is!"

"No puzzle there," said Kelse. "Outker or Uldra, first and last, backward and forward, Jorjol is an egotist. He switches back and forth between roles as it suits him. At this moment he's a Garganche bucko: the swashbuckling Gray Prince. Do you know, it's quite likely that he drove the sky-shark that shot down Father, and the Apex as well!"

Schaine produced an indignant refusal. "What utter nonsense! You know Jorjol better than that! He's proud and gallant! A ruthless assassin? Never!"

Kelse was not convinced. "By Garganche theories, ruthless assassination is equivalent to pride and gallantry."

"You're not at all fair to Jorjol," said Schaine. "His 'pride and gallantry', or however you want to

put it, saved your life. He deserves at least credit for bravery."

"I'll concede him that," said Kelse. "Still, I don't think much of his loyalty."

Schaine laughed. "Loyalty to whom? To what? I never had reason to complain."

"Naturally not; you were in love with him."

Schaine heaved a patient sigh. "I'd prefer to call it infatuation."

"Father, it would seem, is not vindicated."

With an effort Schaine decided not to quarrel with Kelse. She responded quietly and, she hoped, rationally. "Father meant well. He gave Muffin a great deal, up to a carefully defined limit. Muffin naturally resented the limit more than he appreciated the generosity. And why not? Put yourself in his place: half part of the family, half a Blue ragamuffin who ate his meals in the kitchen. He was allowed to look at the cake and even taste it, but never eat any of it."

Elvo Glissam ventured a facetious quip: "And you were the cake—I hope not?"

Schaine raised her eyebrows and looked away with pointed coolness. The remark seemed in poor taste—especially in view of the fact that immediately following Jorjol's rescue of Kelse, she had allowed Jorjol considerably more than a taste. The discovery of the affair had provoked a wrathful explosion in Uther Madduc, which had sent Jorjol flying in one

direction and Schaine thirty-two light years in another.

Schaine said evenly: "Those times are quite remote." She rose to her feet. "The conversation is becoming dull."

Chapter XII

GERD JEMASZE, with his younger brother Adare, two cousins and a nephew, flew the Standard utility up to the Palga across to where the sarai broke against the Volwode foothills. They found the land-yawl undisturbed. Gerd and Adare Jemasze and the nephew sailed the yawl east, while the cousins flew overhead in the sky-car.

A day's brisk sail brought them to No. 2 Depot. Jemasze paid rent for the use of the land-yawl, examined the Dacy sky-boat, which Moffamides' fiaps had kept inviolate. A new priest was on hand, a thin young man with burning eyes and a thin quivering mouth, who watched intently but spoke not a word. Jemasze wondering if Moffamides had gone to sit high in the Aluban, but forebore to question the young priest, who stood glowering at them from across the compound.

No sooner had Gerd Jemasze returned to Suaniset before news arrived from Morningswake of an extraordinary incursion from the Retent. The raiders numbered over four hundred elite warriors,

mixed Hunge, Garganche, Aulk and Zeffir: an amazing circumstance in itself to discover traditional enemies acting in concert. A few Ao scouts skirmished with the outriders, then fell back before the main force, which proceeded to Lake Dor where three Ao kachembas were discovered and defiled.

Kelse immediately broadcast a call for assistance, and the Orer of Uaia found itself required to fight before it had fully defined itself as an entity. A heterogeneous and rather casual assortment of utility flyers, passenger saloons, sky-cars, runabouts and inspection drifters, to the number of sixty, each with a complement of from two to eight armed men, assembled at Morningswake, then flew down to Lake Dor, to discover that the Uldra raiders were already retreating across the rocky barrens west of the lake. The aircraft from the domains attacked with gun and energy-projectors; the Uldras dispersed in all directions. On their lunging mounts they made the poorest of targets and the punitive fleet inflicted minimal damage. . . A score of sky-sharks dropped from the upper atmosphere and in the twinkling of an eye a dozen aircraft were disabled and sent plunging to the ground. Then, before adequate retaliation could be effected, the sky-sharks dashed away to the west.

In a dour mood the land-barons rescued those who had been shot down and returned to

their domains. The foray had been ineffectual; they had been defeated by tactics more clever than their own.

A number of land-barons gathered at Morningswake to discuss the cheerless events of the day. They had ventured forth over-confidently; they had been tricked; they had paid the price of vanity.

Dm. Ervan Collode, a portly and rather bombastic man whom Schaine had always disliked, was one of those who had been shot down by the sky-sharks. He had escaped with a severe jolting and various bruises, but the experience had stimulated him to a vindictive rage. "We'll never have peace until we absolutely break the retent tribes. We must put them in such fear that they'll never again attack us!"

Dm. Joris made a wry observation: "I fear that we lack capacity to cow them. For thousands of years they've been cutting up each other, and it only whets their appetite for more."

"They don't go far enough," declared Dm. Collode. "They never press to a decision! If we destroy their herds, poison their water, we'll force their submission."

Dm. Joris demurred. "I don't believe such tactics would work; they live too easily off the land, and we'd simply have our trouble for nothing."

"There is an important first step we should undertake," said Jemasze. "The Retent tribes are

theoretically wards of the Mull, and we should demand that the Mull assert control."

Dm. Collode blew through his teeth. "What good will that do? The Mull is dominated by Redemptionists! Have you forgotten their manifesto?"

Kelse likewise took exception to the proposal. "We can't declare ourselves independent, then in the next breath appeal for help."

"I suggest no appeal, but a formal notice, from one sovereign entity to another," said Jemasze. "I would notify them that the Retent Uldras are molesting not only us but the tribes under our protection; that we plan decisive action which might include seizure and permanent control of the Retent, unless they take steps to restrain their wards. Then, if the Mull doesn't act, and we do, they can't say that they haven't been warned. If finally we're forced to subdue the Garganche, we at least have a basis of legality."

"What good is legality to the Garganche?" grumbled Dm. Collode. "To an Uldra, might is right."

Schaine could not restrain a sardonic chuckle. "To avoid making fools of yourselves, I suggest that you forego hypocrisy. For two hundred years the land-barons have asserted the right of might, so now, when the shoe is on the other foot, don't look askance at the maxim."

"Hypocrisy isn't an issue," Jemasze responded. "Whenever

there's conflict the weaker side loses; and all else being equal, it's better to win than to lose."

"It depends on the company you keep," said Schaine, darting a glance toward Dm. Collode.

Dm. Joris said: "Undoubtedly Gerd Jemasze is right. To prepare a position, we first must notify the Mull."

Dm. Thanet of Balabar said, "Let us do so at this very moment. We are not precisely an official body, but surely we can function as an instrument to this particular end."

The group moved into the study. Kelse telephoned Holrude House in Olanje. The face of a secretary appeared on the screen. Kelse identified himself. "I am Dm. Kelse Madduc, and I represent the provisional executive committee of the Uaian Order. I have an important message to transmit to the Chairman of the Mull."

"The Chairman, Dm. Madduc, is currently Dm. Erris Sammatzen, and it so happens that he is at hand."

Erris Sammatzen's face appeared on the screen. "Kelse Madduc? We have met, at Villa Mirasol."

"Quite true. My purpose in calling you, however, is not social, but official. I speak for the provisional executive council of the Uaian Order, and I inform you that a large group of Uldras from the Retent, nominally wards of the Mull, yesterday invaded our

lands, specifically Morningswake Domain, and there committed acts of murder and vandalism. We have driven them back into the Retent, and we now look to you to prevent any further incursions."

Erris Sammatzen reflected a moment. "Such raids, if they have in fact occurred, are a serious matter, and certainly cannot be condoned."

"If they have occurred?" cried Kelse angrily. "Of course they have occurred! I just now told you about them!"

Erris Sammatzen said, "Please, Dm. Madduc, don't take offense. As a private individual, of course I believe you. As Chairman of the Mull, I must take a more measured approach."

"I don't follow your distinctions," said Kelse. "The Order of Uaia notifies you, through me, that these raids have occurred, and requires that you ensure their permanent cessation; otherwise we must protect ourselves."

Erris Sammatzen spoke in a ponderous voice. "I must put certain matters into perspective. I remind you that the Mull is the organ of all the folk of Koryphon, and must act in the best interests of all the folk. The land-barons of the Alouan are a minority even upon the so-called 'domains'; they therefore can claim neither autonomy nor any wide representative function. I also remind you of the recent ordinance proclaimed by the Mull which reconstructs

the so-called Domains of Koryphon, regarding which we have received no acknowledgement."

Dr. Joris, perceiving that Kelse was about to make an immoderate reply, stepped forward. "The points you raise are at issue. We hope that they may be resolved in a reasonable manner. Your remarks, however, are not responsive to the notification just made to you by Dm. Kelse Madduc."

"They are not responsive," said Erris Sammatzen, "because the Mull does not recognize the premises upon which they are based. Further, we have received information which contradicts your assertions. I therefore order you to desist from any further acts hostile to tribes of the Retent."

Kelse made a strangled sound of astonishment and displeasure. "Do you suggest that I have made a false report to you?"

"I state only that contradictory information has been put before the Mull."

Dm. Joris once more interposed himself. "In that case, we suggest that you come here to Morningswake and make your own investigations. Then, should you discover, as you surely will, that we have reported the facts accurately, you can make appropriate representation to the Retent tribes."

Erris Sammatzen reflected thirty seconds. Then he said: "I will do as you suggest, in company with other members of the

Mull. In the meantime I ask that you refrain from any further attacks or reprisals, and I will transmit similar instructions to the other parties at contention."

Dm. Joris smiled a cool thin smile. "We will be most happy to meet with the Mull and work out a mutual accomodation: from our point of view the sooner the better. In the meantime, while we do not concede your authority either to instruct or to advise us, we intend to refrain from attacking the tribes of the Retent, except in defense of our sovereign territory."

Kelse asked: "When may we expect you at Morningswake?"

"The day after tomorrow will be convenient."

Chapter XIII

THE LAND-BARONS, all except Gerd Jemasze, had returned to their respective domains, and night had fallen over the Alouan. Schainë went to sit on the front lawn overlooking the starlit landscape. The knots in her mind began to unravel, and her conflicts resolved themselves in the simplest possible manner.

She loved Morningswake: this was the elemental fact; nothing was more real. Morningswake, with its history and traditions breathed a life of its own; Morningswake was an entity yearning for survival. If she intended to live at Morningswake, then she

must protect it. If she felt that she must advance a hostile cause, then she must leave and go elsewhere, which of course was unthinkable.

She thought of Elvo Glissam and smiled. Today, after the land-barons had gone off to punish the Uldras, Elvo had urged that he and she return to Olanje and there espouse each other, to which suggestion Schaine had given an off-hand, almost absentminded, refusal. Elvo had accepted her decision without surprise and had voiced his intention of returning to Olanje as soon as possible. Ah well, thought Schaine, life went on.

She went back into the house. In the study lights still glowed Gerd Jemasze and Kelse conferred late. Schaine went upstairs to her bedroom on the west verandah.

SCHAINE AWOKE. The night was dark, and all was quiet. Yet something had aroused her.

A soft *tap tap* at the door.

Schaine climbed drowsily from bed, stumbled to the door and slid it ajar. On the verandah a tall shape darker than the shadows awaited her. Recognition came instantly, and she was no longer half-asleep. She turned on the lights in her room. "Jorjol! What in the world are you doing here?"

"I came to see you."

Schaine peered in bewilderment up the dark verandah.

"Who let you in?"

"No one." Jorjol gave a soft chuckle. "I arrived by the old route—up the corner column."

"Sheer insanity, Jorjol! What could you have in mind?"

"Need you ask that?" Jorjol leaned forward as if to enter the room but Schaine slipped past and stepped out upon the verandah.

The night was absolutely still. The arabella vine climbing the columns to the roof hung in festoons, and the white blossoms gave off a sweet perfume.

Jorjol stepped a trifle closer; Schaine went to the balustrade and looked out over the landscape, which was dark except for a few glints of starlight reflected from Wild Crake Pond. Jorjol put his arm around her waist and lowered his head to kiss her. Schaine turned away. "Stop it, Jorjol, I'm not at all interested. I haven't the faintest notion why you're here, and, really, you'd better go."

"Come now, don't be prim," whispered Jorjol. "You love me and I love you; it's been that way all our lives, and now more than ever!"

"No, Jorjol, not at all. I'm not the person I was five years ago, and you're not either."

"Quite true! I'm a man, a person of consequence! For five years I've burned for you, and longed for you, and since I saw you at Olanje I've thought of nothing else."

Schaine laughed easily. "Please be sensible, Jorjol! Go away and call tomorrow morning."

"Hah! I don't dare! I'm now the enemy; have you forgotten?"

"Well then, you'd better mend your ways and behave yourself. Now goodnight! I'm going back to bed."

"No!" Jorjol spoke with great earnestness. "Listen, Schaine! Come away with me! My dear girl Schaine! You're not one of these pompous tyrants who calls himself a land-baron! You're a free soul, so come with me now and be free! We will live as happy as birds, with the best of everything the world affords! You don't belong here; you know as well as I do!"

"You're totally and absolutely wrong, Jorjol! This is my home and I love it dearly!"

"But you love me more! Tell me so, my dearest Schaine!"

"I don't love you, not in the slightest. In fact, I love someone else."

"Who? Elvo Glissam?"

"Of course not!"

"Then it must be Gerd Jemasze! Tell me! Is it he?"

"Isn't this a personal matter, Muffin?"

"Don't call me Muffin!" Jorjol's voice rose in pitch and intensity. "And it's not private because I want you for myself. You haven't denied it! So your new lover is Gerd Jemasze!"

"He's not my lover, Jorjol, new or old. And please take your

hands off of me." For Jorjol, in his excitement had clenched his fingers upon her two arms. He whispered huskily: "Please, darling Schaine, tell me it isn't true, that you love me!"

"I'm sorry, Jorjol, it is true, and I don't love you. And now, good night. I'm going back to bed."

Jorjol gave a small ugly laugh. "Do you think I so easily accept defeat? You know me better! I came to get you and you're coming away with me. Very soon you'll learn to love me. I warn you, don't try to fight me!"

Schaine shrank back appalled, and Jorjol's fingers gripped her arms like steel tongs. She drew in her breath to scream; with one long-fingered hand, Jorjol seized her throat; with his other fist he struck her in the side, at the bottom of the rib-cage, in a clever way to cause an agony of pain and Schaine's knees sagged. . . The porch lights went on; she felt a confused scuffle, saw a blur of movement, heard a grunt of shock and dismay.

Schaine staggered to the wall. Jorjol lay crumpled, half against the balustrade. A knife hung in a scabbard against his leg; in his sash gleamed the ivory handle of a pistol. His hands twitched, then jerked for the pistol. Gerd Jemasze stepped forward, struck down at Jorjol's arm, and the pistol went clattering across the floor. Schaine swiftly stooped and picked it up, even while she tingled with embarrassment. How

much had Gerd Jemasze heard?"

The three stood motionless: Jorjol pale, blasted by emotion; Jemasze somber and brooding; Schaine tense with a not unpleasant excitement. Jorjol turned to Schaine and in the wild staring face she thought once more to see the face of Muffin the boy. "Schaine, dear Schaine—will you come with me?"

"No, Jorjol, of course not! It's really absurd to think I might. I'm not an Uldra; I'd be miserable out there on the Retent,"

Jorjol gave a poignant throbbing call, a cry from the heart. "You're like all the other Outkers."

"I hope not. I'm really just myself."

Jorjol drew himself stiffly erect. "I implore you, by your brother's life which I gave to him! This is a blood debt and cannot be denied!"

Gerd Jemasze made an odd sound: a choking gasping stammer as words rose too thickly in his throat to be enunciated. He finally spoke. "Shall I tell the truth?"

Jorjol blinked and cocked his head sidewise. "What truth?"

"You'd best apologize to Lady Schaine and assure her that no obligation exists and then go your way."

Jorjol spoke in a stony voice: "The debt exists, and I demand that she give me my due."

"The debt does not exist and never existed. When the erjin attacked Kelse, you climbed a rock

and watched while the creature tore Kelse to pieces. When you saw Schaine come running, you carefully shot the beast from the top of the rock, then jumped down and pretended to be in the middle of the fight, and you even rubbed Kelse's blood on yourself. You did not try to save Kelse. You allowed him to be mutilated!"

Jorjol whispered: "You lie! You were not there."

Jemasze's voice was cold as fate. "Kurgech was there. He saw the whole thing."

Jorjol gave a sudden cry of despair: an oddly sweet contralto sound. He ran to the corner of the verandah, swung over the balustrade and was gone.

Schaine turned to Gerd Jemasze and spoke in a voice of horror. "Is this true?"

"It's true."

"It can't be true," muttered Schaine, looking back down the years. "It's too awful to be true." It seemed as natural as the wind and the movement of the stars across the sky to find herself sobbing against Gerd Jemasze's chest, his arms around her.

"It's true," said Kelse. He came slowly out on the verandah. "I heard what you told him. I've suspected it for five years. All his life he's hated us. Someday I'll kill him."

Chapter XIV

TO MORNINGSWAKE in a black

and silver Ellux saloon came a delegation from the Mull: Erris Sammatzen and six others. On hand to greet them was the Directive Committee of the Uaian Order: nine land-barons selected and given legitimacy by a hasty telephonic referendum across the Treaty Lands.

Dr. Joris made a rather dry and formal welcoming statement, his purpose being to establish at the outset an official tone to the meeting. In keeping with this concern, the land-barons wore formal dress and each wore his heraldic cap. In contrast, the members of the Mull were almost ostentatiously casual. "The Order of Uaia welcomes you to Morningswake," said Dm. Joris. "We earnestly desire that this conference will reduce the misunderstandings which trouble our two polities. We hope that you will approach the discussions constructively and realistically, and for our part we intend that our relations with Szintarre shall continue to be friendly and intimate."

Sammatzen laughed. "Dm. Joris, thank you for your welcome. As you're well aware, I can't accept, or even take seriously, your other remarks. We have come here to acquaint ourselves with local conditions, so that we can administrate the area in the best interests of the majority of its inhabitants; and hopefully to the ultimate satisfaction, or at least acceptance, of everyone."

"Our differences may or may

not be irreconcilable," said Dm. Joris, without emotion. "If you please, Dm. Madduc has provided refreshment for us; and then, when you are of a mind, we can resume our discussions in the Great Hall."

For half an hour the groups engaged in cautious pleasantries on the west lawn, then repaired to the Great Hall. The formal attire of the Directive Committee accorded with the nobility of the room, the grandeur of its proportions, the richness of the old wood. Kelse seated the Mull on one side of the table, the Directive Committee on the other.

Erris Sammatzen briskly assumed control of the meeting. "I won't pretend that our purpose here is anything other than what it is. The Mull is . . . the single administrative body of Koryphon. We directly represent the population of Szintarre; we provide a forum for the inhabitants of Uaia. Over the Uldra we exercise a benevolent protectorate. The domains of the land-barons are included under our control, by protocols both formal and informal; they also have rights of petition and protest.

"As you know we have felt obliged to issue an edict, the articles of which are now familiar to you." Erris Sammatzen spoke now in a slow and meaningful voice. "We cannot and will not tolerate the recalcitrance of a few hundred stubborn men and women who wish to retain aristocratic pre-

requisites to which they are not entitled. A more natural and equitable system is long overdue, and I remind you that the absolute authority of the land-barons across vast domains, achieved through violence and compulsion, is now terminated. Title is reinvested in those tribes which have traditional and legitimate ownership of the land. We intend to inflict hardship on no one, and will assist in the orderly transfer of authority."

Dm. Joris replied, again without heat. "We reject your edict. It obviously derives from altruism and in this sense does you credit, but it makes a number of doctrinaire assumptions. I point out that the option of self-determination is the inherent right of any community, no matter how small, provided that it conforms to the basic charter of the Gaean Reach. We adhere to these principles, and we claim this right. I now wish to anticipate your claim that the rights of the domain tribes are curtailed. To the contrary. The factors which contribute to what they consider an optimum life have never been more favorable. Our dams and flood-control projects guarantee them year-around water for themselves and their herds. When they need money to buy imported articles, they are able to take temporary or permanent employment, as they wish. Their freedom of movement is absolute, except upon the few acres immediately contiguous to the do-

main halls, so that in effect, there is dual occupancy of the land, to our mutual satisfaction and benefit. We exploit no one; we exert authority only in a protective sense. We provide medical assistance; we occasionally exert police powers, though not often, inasmuch as the tribes usually administer their own justice. We feel that you of the Mull have been stampeded into reckless decisions by the zealous and articulate group known as the Redemptionists, who deal in abstractions and not in facts.

"I ask: what is accomplished by your edict? Nothing. What would the Uldras have which they do not have now? Nothing. They would lose, and we would lose. Your edicts only bring mischief to all of us—assuming that we agreed to them, which we do not."

Dm. Joris was answered by Adelys Lam, a thin nervous woman with a bony face and restless eyes. She spoke in an urgent voice and punctuated her words with jabbing motions of her forefinger. "I intend to speak of law and its innate nature. Dm. Joris, you have used the words 'doctrinaire' and 'abstraction' in a pejorative sense, and I must point out that all law, all ethical system, all morality, are based upon doctrines and abstract principles by which we test specific cases. If we adopt a pragmatic attitude, we are lost and civilization is lost; morality becomes a matter of expedience or brute force. The edicts of

the Mull therefore rest not so much upon exigencies of the moment, but upon fundamental theorems. One of these is that title to pre-empted, stolen or sequestered property never becomes valid, whether the lapse of time be two minutes or two hundred years. The flaw in title remains, and reparation, no matter how dilatory, must be made. Again, you scorn the Redemptionists; as for me, I rejoice that the Redemptionists are sufficiently idealistic and sufficiently motivated that they have urged this sometimes sluggish Mull to decisive action."

Gerd Jemasze responded in a cold voice. "Your ideas might carry more weight were you not hypocrites and persons with an infinite capacity for—"

"Hypocrites?" flared Adelys Lam. "Dm. Jemasze, I am astounded by your use of the word!"

Erris Sammatzen said reproachfully: "I had hoped that our discussions might proceed without fulmination, threats or invective. I am sorry to see that Dm. Jemasze has become intemperate."

"Let him call us names," Adelys Lam cried angrily. "Our consciences are clear, which is more than he can say for his own."

Jemasze listened imperturbably. "My remarks were not invective," he said. "I refer to demonstrable fact. You legislate against our imaginary crimes, and meanwhile you tolerate in Szintarre

and across the Retent an offense proscribed everywhere in the Gaeen Reach: slavery. In fact, I suspect that at least several of you are slave-keepers."

Sammatzen pursed his lips. "You refer to the erjins, no doubt. The facts of the matter are unclear."

Adelys Lam declared: "The erjins are not intelligent beings, by the legal definition of the term, or by any other. They are clever animals, no more."

"We can demonstrate the opposite, beyond any argument," said Gerd Jemasze. "Before you reproach us for abstract transgressions, you should abate your own very real offenses."

Erris Sammatzen said uncomfortably: "You make a cogent point; I can't argue with you. However, I doubt that you can make so positive a demonstration."

Adelys Lam protested. "Surely we are being diverted from our principle task?"

"Our schedule is flexible," said Sammatzen. "I'm willing to clarify this other matter."

Another Mull member, the crusty Thaddios Tarr, said: "We can't avoid doing so and retain our credibility as an impartial administrative body."

Gerd Jemasze rose to his feet. "I think we'll be able to surprise you."

Erris Sammatzen cautiously asked: "How?"

"Uther Madduc called it his

'wonderful joke'. But I doubt if you'll laugh."

Schaine, listening from the side of the Great Hall, said to Elvo Glissam: "I don't understand why anyone should laugh. Do you understand this 'wonderful joke'?"

Elvo shook his head. "It escapes me completely."

THE MEMBERS of the Mull boarded the black and silver Ellux saloon. Gerg Jemasze went to the controls and took the craft aloft. Behind came a a convoy of ten well-armed sky-cars. Gerd Jemasze set a course to the northwest, across the most beautiful region of Morningswake: a land of magnificent vistas and far perspectives.

The scarp which delineated the Palga loomed in the distance; the Volwodes rose into the sky; the land became bleak and broken. At the bottom of a wide valley flowed a glistening river: the Mel-lorus. Jemasze altered course and descended into the valley, to fly only a hundred yards above the river.

The valley walls grew steep and high and obscured part of the sky; a few moments later they passed over cultivated plots and irrigated orchards which Jemasze recognized. He slowed the Ellux until it barely drifted up the gorge, then turned to the members of the Mull. "What I'm about to show you has been seen by very few men indeed. Most of these have been Wind-runners

—because we're close on the station where erjins are bred, trained and marshalled for export. There is definitely an element of danger in this demonstration, but when I am done you will agree that I am justified in bringing you here. In any case our assembled firepower provides protection, and the hull of this Ellux should be tough enough to turn back bullets from the Palga long-rifles.

"I hope," said Julius Metheyr, "that you intend to show us something more than erjins marching in formation or learning to put on their trousers."

Adelys Lam said crossly: "I personally don't care to be killed or even wounded for your personal gratification."

Gerd Jemasze made no response. He set the Ellux saloon down in front of the rose-quartz and gold shrine. He activated doors and descensor; the Mull tramped out upon the pink marble floor.

"What is it?" asked Julius Metheyr in awe.

"It appears to be a temple or historical monument constructed long before the first men arrived on Koryphon. The detail chronicles an erjin civilization."

"Civilization?" asked Adelys Lam.

"You can decide for yourself. Erjins are depicted riding in what appear to be space-ships. You'll see them fighting morphotes, who also use weapons and other adjuncts of a technical society; so

the morphotes also have contrived a civilization in their time. Finally, the erjins record a war with men."

Erris Sammatzen strode forward to examine the seven-tiered fane; the other followed, muttering in amazement as they studied the intricate carving. One by one the escort sky-craft dropped down into the gorge and landed, and the occupants came forth to marvel at the shrine in company with the others.

Erris Sammatzen approached Jemasze. "And this is Uther Madduc's 'wonderful joke'?"

"So I believe"

"But what's funny?"

"The magnificent ability of the human race to delude itself."

"That's bathos, not humor," said Sammatzen shortly. "The joke, at least, is a hoax."

"No, I don't think so," said Jemasze.

Sammatzen ignored him. "The Wind-runner training station is nearby?"

"About half a mile up the gorge."

"Is there any reason why we should not go there now, and put a stop to the traffic?"

Jemasze shrugged. "I couldn't guarantee your safety. But I believe that we mount enough firepower to protect ourselves if the need arose."

"What do you know concerning this operation?"

"No more than you. I saw it for the first time a week or so ago."

Sammatzen rubbed his chin. "It occurs to me that the tribes of the Retent will resent the loss of their mounts. What is your opinion on this?"

Jemasze grinned. "They can buy criptids from the domains."

Erris Sammatzen went to confer with the other members of the Mull; they argued ten minutes, then Sammatzen approached Jemasze. "We want to examine the training station if it can be accomplished safely."

"We'll do our best."

THE COMPOUND and the long buildings were as Jemasze remembered them, and even more somnolent than before. A pair of Wind-runners squatted beside one of the walls. At the sight of the descending sky-craft, they slowly rose to their feet and stood in postures of uncertainty, debating whether or not to take to their heels.

Jemasze dropped the Ellux to the ground directly before the largest of the stone structures. He opened the door, extended the descensor and alighted, followed by Sammatzen and more cautiously by the other members of the Mull.

Jemasze signaled to the Wind-runners; they approached without enthusiasm. Jemasze asked: "Where is the director of the agency?"

"The Wind-runners looked bewildered. "Director?"

"The individual in authority."

The Wind-runners muttered together, then one asked: "Might you be referring to the Old Erjin? If so, there he stands."

Out of the interior of the stone building, like a fish rising from dark water, came an exceedingly large erjin; a creature bald, with neither ruff nor facial tufts, its skin a curious snake-belly white. Never had Gerd Jemasze seen an erjin of such proportions, nor such presence. It glanced aside; one of the Wind-runner stiffened as if by electric shock, then moved forward to stand beside the erjin, where he served as translator, converting telepathic messages into words. The erjin asked: "What do you want here?"

Sammatzen said: "We are the Mull, the primary administrative organ of Koryphon."

"Of Szintarre," said Jemasze.

Sammatzen continued. "The enslavement of intelligent beings is an illegal act, on Szintarre and throughout the Gaeen Reach. We find that erjins are being enslaved as mounts for the Uldra tribes and as servants and workers on Szintarre."

"They are not slaves," the Old Erjin stated, through the agency of the Wind-runner.

"They are slaves by our definition, and we are here to stop the practice. No more erjins may be sold either to Uldras nor to the Gaeans of Szintarre, and those already enslaved will be freed."

"They are not slaves," stated the Old Erjin.

"If they are not slaves—what are they?"

The Old Erjin transmitted his message. "I knew you were coming. You and your fleet of sky-ships were watched as you entered the valley of the monument; you have been expected."

Sammatzen said dryly: "For a fact there seems little activity around here."

"The activity is elsewhere. We sold no slaves; we sent forth warriors. The signal has been broadcast. This world is ours and we are now resuming control."

The men listened gape-mouthed.

The Old Erjin controlled the voice of the Wind-runner: "The signal has gone forth. At this instant, erjins destroy the Uldras who thought to master them.

Those erjins whom you considered servants now dominate the city Olanje and all Szintarre."

Sammatzen stared toward Joris and Jemasze, his face contorted in disbelief and anguish. "Is the creature telling the truth?"

"I don't know," said Jemasze. "Call Olanje by radio and find out."

Sammatzen ran heavy-footed to the saloon. Jemasze watched the Old Erjin reflectively a moment or two, then asked: "Are you planning violence upon us, here and now?"

"Not unless you initiate such violence, inasmuch as you have a clear preponderance of force. So leave here as you came."

Jemasze and Joris retreated to the Ellux saloon, to find Sammatzen turning away from the radio. His face was pale; sweat beaded his forehead. "Erjins are running rampant in Olanje; the city is a madhouse!"

Jemasze went to the controls. "We're leaving, and fast, before the Old Erjin changes its mind."

"Can't we persuade it to call off its warriors?" cried Adelys Lam. "They're killing, destroying, burning! Nothing but bloodshed! Let me out! I will entreat the Old Erjin to peace!"

Jemasze thrust her back. "We can't entreat it to anything. If it were rational it wouldn't have launched the attack to begin with. Let's leave here before the rest of us are dead."

Chapter xv

THE ERJIN UPRISING achieved its most striking successes in Olanje, where fewer than a thousand erjins cowed and dominated the entire city. The residents hysterically submitted to slaughter, or fled pell-mell. Some hid in the jungles; some retreated to their villas in the Carnelian Mountains; a few boarded their yachts, or the yachts of their

friends; others flew air-craft to the Persimmon Islands or Uaia. Only the most negligible resistance was offered, and later, when historians and sociologists studied the episode, and the question was put: "Why did you not fight in defense of your homes?", the responses were generally similar: "We were not organized; we had no leadership; we did not know what to do." "I am not accustomed to the use of weapons; I have always been a peaceful person and I never thought that I might be required to defend myself."

The land-barons of the Uaian domains assembled an expeditionary force of three thousand men, including contingents from the Uldra tribes of the Treaty Lands. In two weeks of cautious probing, fusillades from the air and assaults in improvised armored cars, the erjins were blasted out of the once beautiful city and sent fleeing in bedraggled bands across the countryside. For another two weeks sky-ships and mobile patrols pursued and destroyed the fugitives*; then without formality the expeditionary force returned to Uaia, and the folk of Szintarre ruefully addressed themselves to the task of reconstruction.

The Uldras of the Retent, no

*During the latter stages of this period the Board of Directors of the SEE (Society for the Emancipation of the Erjins), returning to Olanje from their places of refuge, decried 'this orgy of unnecessary and meaningless slaughter.' They recommended that, when feasible, the erjins be captured rather than killed, in order that the captives might be educated, rehabilitated and encouraged to create a new peaceful society, in some unspecified area of Uaia. In the emotional climate of the mop-up, the SEE doctrine received small implementation.

less than the Outkers of Szintarre, suffered from the insurrection. Immediately upon receipt of the telepathic notice, the erstwhile mounts, ignoring pinch-snaffles and electric curbs, reared over backwards to throw their riders, then proceeded to rend them into fragments. Those in pens broke or climbed fences, disconnected electric circuitry and attacked members of the tribe. After recovering from the initial shock the Uldras fought back with a vindictiveness equal to that of the erjins, and successfully defended themselves. Primitive and remote tribes, such as Cuttacks and the Nose-talkers, suffered the most severely, while the Garganche, the Blue Knights, the Hunge and the Noal took relatively few casualties.

Two weeks later the Gray Prince called a grand karoo of the Garganche, Hunge, the Long-lips, and several other tribes; in passionate terms he labeled the erjin insurrection a plot of the Treaty Land Outkers, and he performed the chilling howl of hate, by which an Uldra warrior swore vengeance upon his enemies. Intoxicated with rage and xheng*, the tribesmen echoed his howl, and on the following day an Uldra horde marched off to the east, intending to purge the Alouan of Outkers.

Kurgech brought news of the

imminent invasion to Kelse, who at once notified the Uaian Order War Council. For a second time the sky-army was mobilized and dispatched to the Manganese Cliffs, a great scarp of glossy black schist overlooking the Plain of Walking Bones, where a party of a hundred Aos mounted on criptids were conducting a cautious holding operation against the xheng-crazed warriors of the Retent. As the flotilla approached, sky-sharks plunged out of the clouds; but today they were anticipated and demolished by radar-aimed guns. The Retent Uldras, despite their fanaticism, scattered and retreated across the Plain of Walking Bones, and ultimately took cover in a forest of black jinkos on the slopes of the Gilded Mountains.

Kelse was on hand in the Morningswake utility vehicle which had been converted into a gunship, with a crew of twelve—seven of his cousins and four Ao ranch-hands. During the first few minutes of the encounter a Garganche pellet exploded against an interior bulkhead, breaking and lacerating the shoulder of Ernshalt Madduc. There was no longer any semblance of a battle; Kelse communicated with the Flotilla Commander and received permission to return to Morningswake with the wounded man.

As Kelse flew north, his atten-

*Xheng: untranslatable; a dark and peculiar emotion which might most succinctly be translated *horror-lust*: a generalized desire to inflict torments and agonies, a fervent dedication to the achievement of sadistic excesses.

tion was attracted by a plume of smoke on the horizon, which aroused him to instant alarm. He radioed Morningswake Manor but made no contact, and his foreboding was intensified. He strained the sky-car to its utmost speed, and presently Morningswake appeared ahead.

Smoke arose from a field of dry grain across Wild Crake Pond; also ablaze was the little clapboard schoolhouse where those Ao children who so desired were educated. Morningswake Manor appeared undamaged; but looking through binoculars Kelse saw a sky-blue Hermes Cloud-swift on the lawn before the house.

Kelse dropped the sky-car to the lawn. Eleven men jumped to the ground and with weapons ready ran to the house. In the Great Hall they found five Uldra nobles, drinking the finest wines Morningswake cellars afforded. Jorjol sat in the place of the land-baron, his feet on the table. The appearance of Kelse took him by surprise; he gasped in wonder. Kelse loped across the room and struck him sprawling to the floor. The four other Uldras vented oaths and jumped to their feet, to stand petrified at the sight of the drawn weapons.

"Where is Schaine?" demanded Kelse.

Jorjol picked himself up from the floor and mustered what dignity he was able. He jerked his thumb toward the study. His voice was blurred by wine. "She

chose to lock herself away. She would have come forth when we fired the manor." He lurched a step closer to Kelse and stood looking down his long drooping nose. "How I hate you," he said softly. "If hate were stone I could build a tower into the clouds. I have always hated you. The joy I felt when the erjin tore you apart was like rain on the hot desert and caused me as much pleasure as the attention I gave your sister. My life has not been good, except for those two moments and now I will add a third, for I mean to kill you. If I do nothing else, I will take the life from your wicked Outker body."

A long blade appeared in his hand, thrust forward from his sleeve by a spring. He lunged; Kelse jerked away from the stroke and caught Jorjol's wrist with his right hand; with his steel left hand he caught Jorjol's throat; with his steel arm he lifted him into the air, and staggering to the door threw him out into the yard. He moved forward, and as Jorjol rose to his feet, seized him again and shook him like a doll. Jorjol's eyes bulged, his tongue lolled from his mouth. In Kelse's ears came a screaming: the voice of Schaine. "Kelse, Kelse, please don't! Don't, Kelse! We are land-barons, he is an Uldra!"

Kelse relaxed his grip; Jorjol sagged gasping to the ground.

JORJOL AND HIS HENCHMEN were locked in a cattle-shed and a pair

of guards placed over them. During the night they dug under the back wall, garrotted the guards and escaped.

Chapter xvi

THE WORLD KORYPHON was at peace: a surly, roiling peace of unresolved hatreds and unpleasant insights. In Olanje the physical damage done by the erjin had been repaired; the city seemed as gay and insouciant as ever. Valtrina Darabesq opened Villa Mirasol to three parties in rapid succession to demonstrate that the erjin uprising had left her undaunted. Across the Persimmon Sea the tribes of the Retent sullenly sat in their camps nursing grievances, planning murders, raids and tortures for the future, though without any great zest. On the Palga the Wind-runners eyed the empty slave-pens and wondered how they would buy wheels, bearings and hardware for their sail-wagons. Meanwhile, under the Volwode peaks in the gorge of the river Mellorus, groups of marveling scholars had already begun to examine the rose-quartz and gold fane. The Old Erjin and his associates had departed into regions even more remote than the Volwodes. Jorjol the Gray Prince, however, had not been rendered apathetic by his reverses. The fervor of his emotions had no upper limit; rather than waning with time they

had condensed and thickened and become more pungent.

About a month after the expulsion of the erjins from Olanje the Mull sat in formal session at Holrude House. Tuning in the broadcast of proceedings, Kelse Madduc heard a familiar voice, and saw the splendid figure of Jorjol the Gray Prince standing at that rostrum provided for petitioners, claimants and witnesses. Kelse summoned Schaine and Gerd Jemasze: "Listen to this."

"—this opinion I hold to be defeatist, vague and unprincipled," Jorjol was saying. "Certain conditions have changed, as agreed—but not those conditions under discussion, by no whit! Do ethical principles fluctuate overnight? Does good become-bad? Does a wise decision become a trifle merely because a set of unrelated events have occurred? Certainly not!

"In its wisdom the Mull issued a manifesto terminating the control of the land-barons over domains illegally seized and maintained. The land-barons have defied the lawful commands of the Mull. I speak with the voice of public opinion when I call for enforcement of the Mull's edict. What then is your response?"

Erris Sammatzen, the current chairman, said: "Your remarks, on their face, are reasonable. The Mull indeed issued an edict, which the land-barons have ignored, and intervening circumstances are not germane to the af-

fair."

"In that case," stated Jorjol, "the Mull must compel obedience!"

"There," said Sammatzen, "is the difficulty, and it illustrates the fallacy of issuing large commands which we can't enforce."

"Let us examine the matter as reasonable men," said Jorjol. "The edict is just; we are agreed as to this. Very well! If you cannot enforce this edict, then obviously an organ of enforcement is needed; otherwise, your role in the world becomes no more than advisory."

Sammatzen gave a dubious shrug. "What you say may be true—still I don't feel that we are ready to make such large readjustments."

"The process is not all that difficult," said Jorjol. "In fact I will now volunteer to organize this compulsive force! I will work diligently to strengthen the Mull! Give me authority; give me funds. I will recruit able men; I will procure powerful weapons; I will ensure that the law of the Mull is no longer ignored."

Sammatzen frowned and leaned back in his chair. "This is obviously a very large decision, and at first glance it seems overresponsive."

"Perhaps because you are reconciled to a Mull weak and toothless."

"No, not necessarily. But—" Sammatzen hesitated.

"Do you or do you not intend to enforce your edicts upon all the

folk of Koryphon, high and low, without fear or favoritism?" asked Jorjol.

Sammatzen spoke in an easy voice: "We certainly intend justice and equity. Before we decide how to achieve these fugitive ideals, we must decide what kind of an agency we are, how powerful a mandate our people have given us, and whether we really want to expand our responsibilities."

"Agreed in all respects!" Jorjol declared. "The Mull must come to grips with reality and establish once and for all the nature of its role."

"We'll hardly achieve this task tonight," said Sammatzen dryly, "and in fact it's time to adjourn until tomorrow."

Kelse, Schaine and Gerd Jemasze watched while the members of the Mull slowly made their way to the retiring chambers. Schaine said in a voice half-amused, half-horrified: "In addition to his other talents, Muffin turns out to be a demagogue."

"Muffin is a dangerous man," said Kelse somberly.

"I think," said Gerd Jemasze, "that I would like to be on hand for tomorrow's session of the Mull."

"I want to be there too," said Kelse. "I think it's time to amuse the Mull with Father's wonderful joke."

"I'll come too," said Schaine. "Why should I miss the fun?"

THE MULL convened at its ap-

pointed time in a chamber crowded to capacity by folk who scented momentous, or at least stimulating, events. Erris Sammatzen performed the usual convocation ceremonies and indicated that the business of the day might proceed.

Jorjol the Gray Prince immediately stepped forward. He bowed to the Mull: "Honorable persons! To reintroduce my proposals of yesterday, I call the attention of the Mull to the fact that, in defiance of the Mull's edict, the land-barons of Uaia retain control over lands seized by violence from my people. I request that the Mull implement their edict—by coercion, if necessary."

"The edict has indeed been issued," said Erris Sammatzen, "and to this date has met no compliance, and in fact—" He stopped short as he noticed Gerd Jemasze and Kelse Madduc who had come to stand before the railing which separated the Mull from the audience. "I see before me two land-barons of Uaia," said Sammatzen. "Perhaps they bring us notice in regard to the edict."

"We do indeed," said Gerd Jemasze. "Your edict is absurd, and you had best retract it."

Sammatzen raised his eyebrows, and the other members of the Mull stared down in displeasure. Jorjol stood stiff and alert, his head thrust forward.

Sammatzen spoke politely: "We are a sober honest group; we try our best but we are not infallible

and sometimes make mistakes. But 'absurd'? I think that you have elected an unsuitable adjective."

Gerd Jemasze responded no less equably. "In the light of recent events, the word does not appear too strong."

Sammatzen's voice became heavy. "Do you refer to the erjin insurrection? Ah, but we have learned a lesson indeed, and the Gray Prince, whom you see before you, has suggested a method to repair our weakness."

"You intend to recruit a mercenary army of barbarians? Is that your intent? Do you recall a hundred thousand historical parallels?"

Sammatzen started to speak, then checked himself. "The matter has by no means been decided," he said at last. "We have, however, issued a judgment that the land-barons must cease to assert title to the Treaty lands; and arguments to the effect that time lapse has sanctified title will not be considered."

Jemasze grinned at the Mull. "This then is your considered opinion?"

"It is indeed."

"Then, by precisely the same reasoning, Uldra tribes of the Rentent must yield the territories they now control to the tribes from which they conquered it. These tribes in turn must yield to the tribes which claimed the land before themselves. Ultimately—and here is the idea which

Uther Madduc found so amusing—all must yield to the prior habitancy of the erjins, from whom men originally seized the land. Indeed we have only just crushed their very reasonable and quite legitimate effort to regain these lost territories.”

The Mull stared at Jemasze in bemusement. Sammatzen said in a tentative voice: “This is a facet of the case we had not considered. I agree that it is most challenging.”

Jorjol strode forward. “Very well, do as he suggests! The Uldras support the concept! Give all Uaia back to the erjins, let them take ownership! We will roam the wild lands as before; only destroy the grotesque halls of the Outker land-barons! Break their fences and dams and canals! Expunge every suppurating vestige of the Outker presence! By all means deed the land to the erjins!”

“Not so fast,” said Kelse. “There is more to come: the second part of my father’s joke.” He spoke to Sammatzen. “Do you recall the erjin shrine, or monument—whatever may be its function?”

“Naturally.”

“This was the ‘recent event’ to which Dm. Jemasze referred a few moments ago—not to the erjin insurrection as you supposed. Perhaps you noticed that the erjins are depicted riding in what apparently are space-ships? You know that fossil traces of proto-erjins have never been found on Koryphon? The conclu-

sion is clear. The erjins are invaders. They arrived from space; they conquered the morphote civilization. The morphotes are true indigenes; the fossil record is clear on this point. So the chain of conquest has yet another link. The erjins have no better title than the Uldras.”

“Yes,” admitted Erris Sammatzen, “this is very likely true.”

Jorjol emitted a wild yell of laughter. “Now you award Uaia to the morphotes! Then be sure to give them Szintarre as well, and the villas of Olanje, and the luxurious hotels and all the property you believe yourselves to own!”

Kelse gave a sardonic nod. “This is the third part of my father’s joke. You of the Mull, and all the Redemptionists, found it easy enough to give our land away, by reason of your ethical doctrine; now demonstrate your integrity and give away your own property.”

Sammatzen showed him a sad twisted smile. “Today? At this instant?”

“Any time you like, or not at all, so long as you rescind your edict in regard to us.”

Voices called out from every corner in the chamber: protesting, jeering, applauding. Sammatzen at last restored order. For a period the Mull conferred in soft mutters, but obviously came to no concerted opinion. Sammatzen turned back to Gerd Jemasze and Kelse. “I feel that somehow you are using casuistry to confuse us

but for the life of me I can't define it."

Adelys Lam cried out bitterly: "It is clear to me that the land-barons not only profess a creed of violence, but that they also warp their creed into a travesty of an ethical system."

"Not at all," said Gerd Jemasze. "The travesty exists only because reliance upon abstraction has made reality incomprehensible to you. These issues aren't merely local; they extend across the Gaeen Reach. Except for a few special cases title to every parcel of real property derives from an act of violence, more or less remote, and ownership is only as valid as the strength and will be required to maintain it. This is the lesson of history, whether you like it or not."

"The mourning of defeated peoples, while pathetic and tragic, is usually futile," said Kelse.

Sammatzen shook his head in dismay. "I find such a doctrine repellent. The enjoyment of human rights should rest upon a base more noble than brute force."

Jorjol gave another caw of laughter. "You and your sheep-brained Mull: why don't you pass an edict to this effect?"

Kelse said: "When the galaxy is ruled by a single law, these ideals may have substance. Until then, that which a man, a tribe, a nation or a world, or the entire Gaeen Reach possesses, it must be prepared to defend."

Sammatzen threw up his hands. "I move to rescind the edict dissolving the domains of Uaia. Who dissents?"

"I do," declared Adelys Lam. "I am yet a Redemptionist; I will never be anything else."

"Who assents? . . . I count eleven votes, including my own. The edict is canceled and we now adjourn for the day."

Jorjol strode from the chamber, robes flapping about his long legs. Kelse, Gerd Jemasze and Schaine followed. Out upon the avenue Jorjol halted to look first one way then the other. To his left the way led across the Persimmon Sea, to Uaia and the lands of the Retent; to his right, only a hundred yards along Kharanotis Avenue, the space depot offered transit to other worlds.

"How he hates us!" mused Schaine. "And think! We nurtured this hate by our own deeds. We were so vain and proud that we refused to admit an Uldra waif into our Great Hall; think of the tragedy it brought to all of us! I wonder: have we learned our lesson?"

Kelse was silent for a moment. Then he said: "This is the language of Olanje and not the reality of Uaia. It contains bright glimmers of truth but not all the truth."

Jemasze said: "There are as many realities as there are people. At Suaniset any gentleman may dine at our table, no matter what clothes he wears."

Kelse gave a sour chuckle. "And at Morningswake as well. Uther Madduc fostered his private reality perhaps too rigidly."

"There goes Jorjol!" said Gerd Jemasze, "off to inflict himself upon another world." For Jorjol had chosen to turn right, toward the space-port.

The three strolled along

Downfall (cont. from page 31)

someday he had known he would go. Out there he would be on his own, a million miles from humanity.

Venus loomed beneath on my third orbit. My hands dutifully adjusted, my mouth recorded, the radio blared, crackled. . . laughed. Suddenly there was the explosion and I hung among the stars, no longer in orbit but falling in with my ballute blooming, multifoliate, above, not yet able to cope with atmospheric displacement. I was falling into the arms of Venus.

The atmosphere is thicker now and the first tendrils of the clouds of hydrochloric acid are licking up at me. My suit is all that is between me and the heat which must have climbed to over 300° K.

THE BOY of ten had stood beneath the stars trying in vain to see into

Clubhouse (cont. from page 73)

THE WAITING FOR PAUL J. STEVENS FANZINE (Paul Stevens, with Bill Wright; G.P.O. Box 2167L, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia; one-shot, mimeo; 20 pp., available by request. Feb-

Kharanotis Avenue toward the Seascape Hotel. A tall mesh fence separated the road from the swamp, and a gap in the foliage afforded a view across the swamp, down to the slow water of the Viridian River. A morphote, resting on a log, made an incomprehensible gesture and slipped off into the undergrowth. —JACK VANCE

the future. He had stood with visions of conquest and adventure swimming before his eyes. Surely he wouldn't be called a rotten egg then.

I sat in my ship talking with myself, trying to ward off that sadness which closed about my head. And I stared at my old friends burning outside my window.

The static and voices from the radio seemed somehow very alarmed. I laughed and I laughed at my laugh. Suddenly the radio was quiet. I could see my arm floating in front of me with a heavy wrench clasped in my fingers, and the other arm hovering above the manual override. The *first* man on Venus. Retro. Eject. Explosive charge.

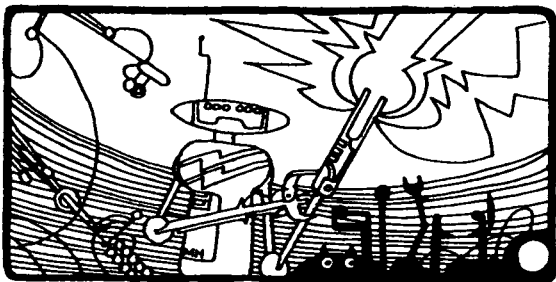
I guess it was when my cave began to smell like rotten eggs that I decided to jump.

—JEFF JONES

ruary, 1974) An introduction to Paul J. Stevens, Aussie Anti-Fan and DUFF candidate; and to Aus-siefandom and the DUFF race in general.

—SUSAN WOOD

...OR SO YOU SAY



Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of each sheet, and addressed to Or So You Say, Box 409, Falls Church, Va., 22046.

Dear Ted:

I would appreciate it if you could pass along the following information to your readers:

"ConFusion 13: Jan. 24-26. Fred Pohl, Pro Guest of Honor, and Mike Glicksohn, Fan Guest of Honor. Held at the Michigan League in Ann Arbor, Michigan. For more information, contact: Ro Nagey Rm. 240, Michigan Union, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich., 48104."

Our last convention, held in February, in which Lloyd Biggle was our Guest of Honor, was able to donate \$60 to the Down Under Fan Fund. Again, next year, all proceeds will go to the fan fund of the members' choice.

RO NAGEY
ConFusion 13 Chairperson
731 Packard #112
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

Dear Ted:

Having read the latest few issues of AMAZING, the letters columns bring out an interesting controversy: Who are the greatest authors in the SF field?

I would like to find out, myself, and I'm sure that there are a lot of other fans out there who would also. So here's how to find out:

1. Go through your library (private or public) and decide who your favorite authors are. Please try to limit the list to five or ten.

2. Write the names down on a piece of paper and send the piece of paper to: 518 Outlook Drive, Los Altos, CA, 94022. Put an "Attn: Author Election" on the envelope or address slot or whatever.

3. Keep buying AMAZING, 'cause that's where I'm gonna send the results!

O.K., fans, get with it!

DAN OAKES
518 Outlook Drive
Los Altos, CA 94022

Dear Mr. White:

It was nice to see Mr. Boutillier's response to Mr. Watson's letter, even if the purpose of having him respond prior to its publication was thwarted. Well, the best laid plans of mice and men.

None of the other letters present anything on which I have to comment and neither does the editorial, with exception to the part that refers to *The Clubhouse*. I was sorry to see Mr. Smith depart from the pages of AMAZING, but replacing him with a

reviewer who has been responsible, in part, for one of the biggies in fanzines, was some consolation. My one regret about Ms. Glicksohn's first column was that she spent the bulk of it on three publications, none of which had much to do with a fanzine approach. As she said *Extropolation* and *Foundation* had a book format. They were also in the tone more of professional publication and were in fact like many professionally done books. The main variance being that they were published under the fanzine banner.

I like this kind of review, but I would like to see the column on the whole, a bit more balanced. Next month she *might* go the other way and devote the hog's share of comments to the Fannish fanzines, which I wouldn't be much happier with. A diversity is best, but I realize sitting on the sidelines as I am, that may be easier said than done.

The fiction was exceptionally good this time, with the exception of the Malzberg piece, which was particularly mediocre. I was a bit surprised to see that kind of dullness out of Malzberg. Highly untypical. The Campbell story was very good, which surprised me after reading how you came by it.

The Brunner novel, great. That's the kind of story I like from Brunner and it's part of what makes him my favorite author. With "The Stone That Never Came Down" a few months ago in *AMAZING* and his "Web of Everywhere" which just finished in *Galaxy*, he's been quite busy I would say.

Well that's about it from me today. Til next time.

WAYNE W. MARTIN
Rte. 1, Box D-64
Macclenny, Florida 32063

Unfortunately, The Clubhouse was squeezed out of our last issue, but as you can see, it is achieving the balance you want. Future columns may be devoted to specific topics, however, as seem appropriate.—TW

Dear Ted,

This isn't a strong opinion or a personal view, it's just a story. It's a true story though, and that's what I don't like about it.

I have relatives living in Fairfax, Virginia, which is about a stone's throw from Ye Olde Editor's abode in Falls Church. Fairfax is a rich suburb of Washington, D.C., and the people who live there have money.

One of my relatives is Jimmy, who is in second grade. Recently he had to miss a week of school. His mother called the teacher to ask about what work Jimmy had missed. The teacher said that they had started multiplication.

Up here in God's Country, we teach multiplication in third grade. I learned to multiply in Washington, Pennsylvania when I was in third grade. Most schools teach multiplication in third grade. Jimmy's mother mentioned this. The teacher said yes, that's true, but that there was an achievement test to be given and that Fairfax children always score higher on the test than the national norm and that there are questions about multiplication on the test and since most second graders don't know how to multiply they were teaching them so they would know how so they could answer the questions so they could get higher scores on the test. And that's why they're teaching second graders multiplication in Fairfax, Virginia, a rich suburb outside of Washington, D.C.

SAT and ACT scores play a large

part in who gets accepted in colleges nowadays. Colleges are getting hard to get into, and even if you can get in you may not be able to afford it. Scholarships are very few and mighty far between. I know this. There are a lot of science fiction fans my age who know this. Maybe you know it. But the Fairfax, Virginias of this world know it, and they're trying to keep more of us from finding out.

DAVID TAGGART

Class of '77

Chandler Road

White River Jct.,

Vermont 05001

Frankly, Dave, I think you're all wet. I learned multiplication in the second grade (here in Falls Church), although the first achievement test I ever saw was not until the fourth grade. In checking this question with various acquaintances—educated in other parts of the country—I found that all of them had been taught multiplication in the second grade, and several grade school teachers told me that this is the norm—simple addition and subtraction in the first grade, simple multiplication (tables from two to ten) and simple division in the second grade, long division and two-digit multiplication in the third grade, fractions in the fourth grade, etc. In today's schools, however, "new math" and set theory are used early on—something with which I've had no experience myself. As for SAT, etc., these tests are administered in high school—not grade school. As it happens, the schools around here have high standards and do a better than average job of education—one reason I moved back, so that my daughter would have this advantage. Are you saying their standards should be lowered?—TW

Or So You Say:

We don't live in a frontier society any longer? Hell's bells, a man was safer on the streets of Dodge City or Oglalla back 100 years ago than he is now in NYC, Philly, or Daleyland. As for women? A man who roughed up a woman on the frontier lasted only as long as the nearest men needed to get him attached to a cottonwood-branch. No mo', though. Nowadays it is even a Bad Thing to defend oneself. I have lately seen one quote of a young lady in Chi who was dragged up an alley by a man. She produced a knife and cut him enough to change his mind. The police rushed him off for treatment at a nearby hospital and she got fined \$25 for a concealed weapon charge. . . . Had she relaxed and enjoyed it, she might today be a statistic like the eight nurses that Speck Done His Thang with some years ago.

We no longer have any legitimate use for civilian arms? Now and then there comes a story in a paper that indicates someone used a gun legitimately, to stop a rabid creature from biting them or their kids, and managed to prevent in one case I've heard of, the need for a Pasteur series. A child bitten by a squirrel was saved this since the kid's mother saw the animal immediately afterward in a tree and shot it. It proved healthy and that was that. The Pasteur series can be harmful or fatal at times. . . . Even though needed.

Consider the girl written up recently for her sheepherding job out in the hills of a Western state. She keeps a 30-30 handy to stop coyotes. I expect she will only use it if she needs to. Here, in an eastern rural area, not far from a few large cities, there was a sheep kill of 175 sheep by two dogs, not feral dogs, but farmer's

pets. They were shot. Regrettable, but necessary.

Farmers are out of reach of the radio cruisers for all intents and purposes. To whom do they turn for instant protection in case of marauders? Most of them have an old 12 gauge racked on the wall. It is there. The sheriff ain't.

Having guns around, loaded or empty, places a responsibility on the owner to make sure that *any* kids around know enough to leave them alone, or handle them safely. I have had 7 assorted nieces and nephews here a lot of the time around my guns, and have made sure they knew enough to ask me for a look at any of them they were curious about.

Others have been foolish, and have caused casualties galore. Your answer of a responsible citizenry as the answer to the gun problem is perhaps the only really good one. How do we get that way? We have a lot of would-be White Knights on one hand, Extreme Black Militants on the other, and some really far out people like the SLA, who have scared most of the west coast left wing away from them. They'll never make it. The bulk of the citizenry is teachable, and should be taught.

Consider some day the exposure that the views of Patrick Murphy, John Lindsay, Ted Kennedy, and lesser lights like Carl Bakal and Franklin Zimring have in the papers, magazines, and tv. . . Note the small amount of opinion favorable to citizens owning guns, this mostly in the hunting and shooting press, and occasional letters to editors. The Down With Dreadful Guns stuff runs roughly 10 to 1. And again, I wonder what would happen if the Media managed to bust up the Bill of Rights

(an obsolete thing framed for past conditions) and then found it was their chubby posteriors on the grill?

The men who assembled the Bill of Rights did not do so idly. They knew that established churches were a form of tyranny. They'd had some. They were aware of the fun it could be to be disarmed and occupied. They'd had some. They knew how without such laws they faced search, seizure, bills of attainder, and medieval torture. Thus the 4th and 5th Amendments. . . misused, it's true, at times, but still a barrier to would-be dictators. . . .

So the 2nd Amendment is out dated? Observe one of the most sober and responsible citizenries around. They vote on major and minor matters as they come up, work diligently, are inventive as hell, and each adult male keeps a good service rifle in the closet and practices with it often. The Swiss Federation has lost its freedom once and proposes it won't happen again without a hell of a fight. Can it ever happen to us? Observe how the KSU trial comes out. Some of the younger members of the National Guard were discussing that a while back and they opined that if the prosecution wins, it will be hard to recruit *anybody* and impossible to get anyone out for riot duty. So get out the old Ivory Johnson.

I hope this hasn't sounded too soapboxy. After all, you did give me a podium and didn't accompany it with snide cracks. You are entitled to your opinions, even if you are An Editor. . . .

JOHN P. ILLEGIBLE
(aka CONLON)

52 Columbia Street
Newark, Ohio 43055

You make a number of good points (have I said that before?), but I must

say that if the trial of the Guardsmen at Kent State dissuades trigger-happy recruits from joining the National Guard, I for one will not object loudly. The thing to be kept in mind is that in such "riots" all participants are citizens of the United States and entitled to the usual legal rights. The death penalty is not usually appropriate—and opening fire upon "rioters" is in effect invoking that penalty. . . as happened at Kent State. Obviously, lethal weapons have no place in riot control. I've never understood the "Liberal" objections to less lethal methods of crowd control, such as a gas which causes vomiting or diarrhea—and takes the edge off an out-of-control mob quite, quickly. Even fire hoses can be more effective than bullets. In most of these cases we are not dealing with issues which easily resolve themselves into a Good side and a Bad side, and the thought which should remain uppermost with authorities who are faced with riots is to act with restraint and common sense and avoid bloodshed whenever possible, no matter what the provocation to act harshly.—TW

Dear Ted:

Thank you for giving us Drusilla Campbell's enchanting story, "Piper, What Song?." Women seem to have a special genius for this sort of thing—at least in our culture, if one may call what is left of contemporary global society a "culture." But here comes the "but." For me, Drusilla's story is slightly flawed. LaTierra has no moon.

The Earth-Moon binary is unique in the Solar System. If Drusilla were to follow the Theory of Tidal Friction out to its logical conclusions, she would find that biological life as we know it can develop and survive only on a celestial body which is partner in a planetary binary. I know this is only theory and few astronomers will even discuss the matter, but it explains a great deal which would be otherwise inexplicable.

Please ask Drusilla to write us another of her enchanting stories. But this time let us have a planetary binary in which both planets are equally well developed—not Earth-Moon, but a sort of Earth-Earth.

JOE EASTMAN
(address withheld by request)

Stella Blue (cont. from page 29)

technically clean as ever, but now there was something more, something deeper: call it passion, feeling, soul, or whatever you will.

Nor did it end there. Always a man of ambition, Garcia was now a man possessed. He reached into other realms, mastering all varieties of autar-playing, from grilly to pop to rock and beyond. And he tossed off women like whiskey

chasers, with a cruelty that was yet somehow gentle.

Thus do legends feed upon themselves. Thus does the time-stream bend back upon itself, like a DNA strand forming sulfide bridges between amino acids. Thus has it been; thus it will be. In the end it's just a song, and nothing comes for free.

—GRANT CARRINGTON

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Editorial (cont. from page 5)

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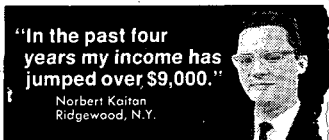
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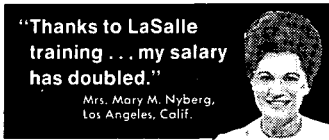
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